The Commercial Side of Literature

MICHAEL JOSEPH

Thomas E. Breckenridge

THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE

THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE

By MICHAEL JOSEPH
Author of "Short Story Writing for Profit"

In collaboration with

GRANT OVERTON
Author of "American Nights Entertainment," "The Women Who Make Our Novels," Etc.

NEW YORK AND LONDON
Harper & Brothers Publishers

THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE
COPYRIGHT, 1926, BY HARPER
& BROTHERS. PRINTED IN
THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

A-C

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Modern Novel	1
II.	The Modern Novel (continued)	24
III.	The Book Market	44
IV.	Author and Publisher	71
V.	Approaching Publishers	99
VI.	The Literary Agent	112
VII.	Contracts	138
VIII.	Copyright	156
IX.	Producing and Marketing a Book	168
X.	Film, Dramatic, Serial and Other Rights	184
XI.	The Author and Publicity	209
XII.	The American Market	230

THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE

THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE

Chapter One: The Modern Novel

"OF the making of books there is no end." The spread of popular education, the commercialization of printing on a large scale, and the ever-growing demand for books of all kinds, especially fiction, are factors responsible for the vast increase in the number published throughout the world. Statistics, it is said, can be made to prove anything. Certainly the increasing crop of books is evident enough without the aid of quoted figures. Reviewers are aware of it, sometimes to their sorrow. The number of new publishing firms which have come into existence in the last few years testifies to the activity if not the prosperity of the industry. The vast output of new novels is particularly significant. "The reading public has increased enormously. Every town and half the villages have their own library circle, where books may be read and borrowed and discussed. Every year the commercial potentialities of the successful novelist are increased." I quote the words of a well-known publisher.

Authors have sprung into being in surprisingly large numbers, and often from equally surprising sources. It is a commonplace to say that nowadays everyone thinks he can write a book. It is a book-writing age. Practically everyone of importance has been prevailed upon (one suspects that many of them did not require much persuasion) to write his or her reminiscences. Even people of no conceivable importance have inflicted their reminiscences on the public. Presently we shall have high-school girls unburdening their memoirs, for the craze continues.

In the field of fiction the increase in the number of novels published is even more remarkable. Present-day novelists are recruited—it would be nearer the mark to say that they enlist voluntarily—from all classes of society, irrespective of education, experience, or even ability. The author of *Pamela,* so often described as the Father of the English Novel, must surely turn in his grave unless he be mercifully unaware of the swelling heterogeneous ranks of the modern novelist.

This state of affairs is vastly encouraging to anybody with literary ambitions. The lowering of the standard of published work inevitably encourages more and more people to try their hands at getting into print. The rapid growth of jour-

nalism tempts its numerous practitioners, successful or otherwise, to turn their attention to the book world—successful journalists, often out of a sense of *noblesse oblige;* and the unsuccessful, probably because they think they may have better luck with a novel. And they very often do. From spasmodic articles the victim of *cacœthes scribendi* drifts, probably unsuccessfully, to the short story, the most difficult literary form, then turns hopefully to the more catholic and certainly easier prospect of a novel.

Actually, the number of new books published in America during 1924 was 6,380—only a slight increase over the previous year's total. The number registered in 1910, according to the *Publishers' Weekly,* was 11,671. The present figures correspond roughly to the output of twenty years ago, but the increase in the cost of book manufacture, now happily abating, has been doubtless responsible for the temporary setback. It is worth noting, when reviewing the year's book-production figures, that there was a distinct increase in fiction volumes. Over 12,000 new books were published in Great Britain in 1924. To quote the *Publishers' Circular:* "The year 1924 takes rank as the record year in the history of British book production." Twenty years ago the figure was less than 7,000.

But it is not as a result of the increase in output

that conditions in the publishing world have undergone such considerable change. The whole business of book publishing has become much more complicated because of developments in the value of literary property.

The cry of "too many books" is frequently raised nowadays. It is a curious fact that when people talk disparagingly of too many books, they really mean too many novels. Every year sees an increase in the number of novels published in the English language. It is undoubtedly the field which attracts the largest number of new writers.

From remote and stray beginnings the novel has in recent years suddenly assumed the proportions of a literary giant. Its rapid growth and development are amazing. Of all the books published since the beginning of this century, by far the largest proportion consists of works of fiction. Presumably the law of supply and demand regulates the production of published fiction. The demand for fiction on such a wholesale scale must be due to the artificial complexities of a civilized state. Men and women, especially women, seek in the vicarious realm of fiction the wider range of human experiences which a complex and narrowed life denies them. Having neither time nor opportunity in this crowded, hustled existence to taste the joys and sorrows, the vicissitudes and

triumphs of a more elemental experience, they turn to fiction to satisfy their natural craving. Perhaps it would be truer to say that the flavor of their own experiences is lost in the monotony and proximity of ordinary everyday life. The drama of one's own personal problems and experiences is seldom realized. There is not time to relish contact with the sharper edges of life. For emotional satisfaction, civilization-hampered people turn to fiction.

From the author's point of view this preamble may seem not altogether to the point. But so many modern novels fail through an imperfect understanding or complete ignorance of the nature and functions of the novel that the point is well worth examination. Every author who contemplates writing a novel should make sure that he or she can satisfactorily answer the question, "Why do people read novels?"

A complete answer to the query would necessarily cover many varying reasons. If one could take a census of readers, a surprising variety of motive would doubtless be revealed. Some readers would vaguely reply, "I want to be entertained." Others, more intelligently candid, would reply that to them fiction represented variously a temporary escape from the harsh realities and dreary monotony of their lives, an opiate, a nar-

cotic, an intellectual stimulant. A few, perhaps unconsciously, seek the benefit of the instructional pill in the generous jam of fiction. Some read to enlarge their mental horizons, to add to their range of experience. Others derive from novels the pleasures of observation and criticism. A not inconsiderable number of people read, at any rate, the works of our most fashionable novelists in order to guard against potential chinks in their conversational armor. But, fundamentally, the demand for fiction is inspired by the desire, generally subconscious, to enjoy the illusions which real life, with its disappointments and hardships, fails to give the reader. This explains the popular preference for stories with happy endings. Deprived of the satisfaction of a triumphant climax to their own efforts in life, disillusioned people turn to fiction for consolation and, by subconsciously identifying themselves with the heroes and heroines of the novel, achieve a temporary and illusory satisfaction. The majority of plays produced on the modern stage, with their artificial happy endings, fulfill the same purpose.

Not every novelist will subscribe to this theory. The realists aim at a truthful presentation of life, or of a fragment of life. They refuse to hand the reader a pair of rose-colored spectacles. They contend that it is artistically wrong to present a

falsely colored picture of life. The novel, they submit, should truly represent life. Not for them the artificial happy ending, the conventional triumph of virtue over villainy, the careful omission of the dull or unpleasant phases of life. They prefer the science of photography and the microscope to the art of crude imagery. They, in their turn, are catering for a section of the reading public which, if numerically inferior to the more popular element, is certainly entitled to be regarded as discriminating.

Commercially, of course, the comparison is significant. For every reader of Henry James and D. H. Lawrence there are a hundred readers of Zane Grey and Ethel M. Dell. The contempt of some authors, whose success is artistic rather than commercial, for their more popular contemporaries is a familiar symptom. It is very stupid. They speak disparagingly of "tripe" and "philistines" and their own inability to "write down to the public," because they fail to recognize that there is as wide a gulf between certain popular and certain artistic authors as there is between the *Red Book* and the *Yale Review*. They both appear in print, but there the resemblance ends. It is also a publishing anomaly that novels should be issued at a uniform price and in more or less uniform format.

It is, however, difficult to sympathize with the author of high artistic reputation and correspondingly small sales who tearfully laments his inability to exceed the sales of ——. (Here he names bitterly one of the artistically despised but commercially flourishing "best-sellers.")

A few authors, it is quite true, have achieved both reputation and profit, but the gulf between the highbrow and the "best seller" is so wide that very, very few can hope to bridge it. Sometimes the young novelist finds it hard to believe that certain novelists' books don't sell, in spite of eulogistic reviews in eminent journals. But good reviews don't necessarily sell books. This question of press reviews is dealt with in Chapter XI. For the present, the budding novelist must take the statement on trust. I could reveal figures which would convince the most obstinate skeptic.

It amounts to this. To sell his novel, the author must satisfy the requirements of the public. Public taste is a very difficult thing to gauge, but certain fundamental principles are plain. I don't mean that it's only a question of assembling and mixing the necessary ingredients to produce a "best-seller." There is a good deal more in the making of saleable literature than that.

I always remember a cartoon published a few years ago. It showed a kitchen in a chaotic state,

a table stacked with dirty dishes, the floor an untidy mess of brooms, pails, and other household utensils—a kitchen as dreary and dirty as could be found anywhere. In the midst of this a young domestic servant is sitting, untidy and bedraggled as the kitchen itself. Her feet are on the table and a novel lies open on her lap. There is an ecstatic smile on her face—in striking contrast to her drab surroundings—and she is looking in imagination, depicted in the cartoon by the head of an Adonis in a cloud, at the hero of the novel she is reading. The title of the cartoon is "The Best Seller."

That cartoon was based on an understanding of human nature. Authors who can produce the type of novel that takes the spice of dashing adventure and breathless romance into the drab alleyways of gray lives will worry more about paying their income tax than paying their rent.

At this point it may be illuminating to go more thoroughly into this question of the "best-seller." At the outset let me disclaim any intention of trying to provide an infallible recipe for the manufacture of this coveted product. So many different and elusive factors contribute to the success of a published novel that a satisfactory analysis is impossible.

There are, however, certain readily identifiable

qualities whch are revealed by an examination of the finished article. First, there is sincerity. Whatever foolish (and envious) sneers are leveled at the "best-seller," there was never a "best-seller" yet that was written with the author's tongue in his cheek. The big battalions of the reading public may not be intellectually distinguished, but they are quick to detect insincerity. Besides, to write convincingly—and here we are on the very foundations of successful fiction writing—it is surely essential to be sincere. If the writer can't sincerely write about the tribulations of a young girl's romance or take a deep, personal interest in the progress of his characters to a happy, satisfying conclusion, he might just as well put down his pen and turn to more congenial, if less profitable, subjects. Of all the qualities of the "best-seller" I am inclined to rate sincerity the highest. It is also the most searching test of the author's ability to produce a "best-seller."

Next, it must contain, or rather *be,* a good story. This is the backbone of the "best-seller." No novel ever sold over twenty thousand copies that was not a good story. That is to say, it must have a good plot—by no means a feature of every novel, but undoubtedly an essential one in the case of the "best-seller"—plenty of action, and a strong, sustained human interest. Now "human

interest" is one of the things that novelists and critics talk glibly about, but what is it?

Its meaning, as applied to a novel, is that the reader should be enabled, by the setting and circumstances of the story, to identify himself with the central figure or figures, to find himself confronted at each stage of the story with the problems and situations which confront the protagonists. In other words, the hero's problems should become a personal equation; the reader should be saying to himself, "Now what am I going to do?" In order to obtain this effect, the story must obviously be striking enough to arouse and sustain the reader's interest, while at the same time it must not impose too much of a strain on his credulity. If at any stage in the story the reader puts the book down in surprise or disgust, because he is asked to swallow something too wildly improbable, the illusion which is the whole fabric of fiction is immediately shattered. The success of *If Winter Comes* was largely due to the fact that the average reader recognized himself in Mark Sabre, and, as he read the story, imagined himself up against it just as poor Mark was. It is also an illuminating point that those readers who didn't like *If Winter Comes,* or who couldn't understand its wide popularity, fastened on the improbability of the Effie episode as the

weak point of the book. For them, it was asking a little too much to believe that any man would have behaved with Mark's quixotic foolishness.

The author of a "best-seller" is thus at all times between the Scylla of exasperating the reader by over-straining his credulity and the Charybdis of losing his interest by an unexciting passage in the story.

But to return to the ingredients of the "best-seller." The importance of the happy, satisfying ending has already been emphasized. This does not, however, mean that there should be no element of sadness or grief in the story. On the contrary. The greater the troubles and tribulations of the hero or heroine, the more effective the happy ending when it does come. In fact, the hero or heroine will usually be found, on examination of the "best-seller," to have plumbed the very lowest depths of misery, to have fought against almost overwhelming odds, to have endured almost incredible misfortune, before finally arriving (in the last chapter) in the haven of permanent happiness and prosperity.

It is all very simple. The novel that sells on the scale of Ethel M. Dell just represents the ordinary human being's idea of a happy dream duly realized. It never does happen in real life;

that's why the largest numbers of readers turn to the story which supplies their need.

Less discernible, but as notable a feature of the "best-seller," is the outstanding theme, or message, or moral, call it what you will, which pervades the whole story. There is always something which lifts the story a little above the level of the ordinary tale, and which strikes a responsive note in the heart of the average reader. Often this *motif* is religious in character; but whatever form it may take, it invariably appeals to a deep-rooted human instinct. There is, curiously enough, inevitably something primitive in anything that appeals to people in the mass.

Finally, there is another, and a much more practical aspect of the "best-seller." I refer to its length. The average novel is about 80,000 words long. Most "best-sellers" will be found to be considerably longer. I choose a few titles at random: *If Winter Comes, Main Street, Of Human Bondage, Three Soldiers, The Green Hat, The Rosary, The Middle of the Road*—all books considerably longer than the ordinary novel. The significance of this point is doubtful. Possibly it reflects the public desire for value for money; or it may be an indication that a story which is destined to appeal to an abnormally wide circle of readers must be constructed on a scale suffi-

ciently vast to require a larger number of printed pages in its ultimate form.

The secret of the "best-seller," however, is not to be discovered by any analysis of existing specimens. Most "best-sellers" have surprised their own authors. It is certainly true that authors who have produced a "best-seller" usually regard others of their books as more deserving of popular favor. Of one thing I am convinced, the success of any novel largely depends on the time at which it is published. *If Winter Comes* appeared at the psychological moment. So did *The Middle of the Road.* If Sir Philip Gibbs's novel had been published a year earlier or a year later, I am sure I am right in believing that it never would have enjoyed the wide popularity it at once attained in 1923.

For the purpose of the foregoing attempt at analysis I have dealt only with modern "best-sellers," but it must be remembered that many of the books which delighted previous generations still sell many thousands of copies a year. In such ever popular stories as the novels of Dickens, *Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, Don Quixote, Pilgrim's Progress, Black Beauty, Little Lord Fauntleroy,* and many others, will be found the same fundamental appeal, transcending all merits or faults of style, narrative or theme.

Then there are many authors whose popularity is not quite so evident, but whose books are regularly sold and reprinted by the ten thousand and twenty thousand. Such authors are not generally considered to rank among the "best-sellers," but their large sales may be accounted for by the presence of best-selling qualities in their work.

One factor which undoubtedly contributes to the success or failure of a novel is its title. A happy title is a tremendous asset. Although it may be going too far to suggest that a good title will make all the difference between success and failure, the theory was tested in an interesting fashion quite recently. A book of short stories was published simultaneously in England and America, the English publisher choosing one title, the American publisher another. For a volume of stories it met with immediate success in England, but in America proved an almost complete failure. With most of his edition on his hands, the American publisher took the unusual step of reissuing the book under the title chosen by the English publisher, with the interesting result that its sales began to increase immediately, and the book eventually proved as successful in America as in England.

The wrapper, or "jacket," as it is technically called, is also a potent selling factor. Originally

devised to protect the book from becoming worn and dirty (it is still sometimes referred to as the "dust cover"), its development has been mainly pictorial and many of the colored designs and illustrations which adorn the paper wrapper of the modern novel are so attractive that they cannot fail to have a favorable influence on the book's sale.

Ask any publisher's traveler what a difference a good "jacket" makes. For some novels a plain, dignified wrapper is most appropriate, but for the majority a striking picture in colors which illustrates an exciting incident in the story is more likely to attract the attention of potential readers.

It is questionable whether "readableness" has much to do with the success of a novel. Although a vigorous narrative style often contributes to a book's popularity (as, for instance, it undoubtedly did in the case of *Babbitt*) I doubt whether it is an essential factor. One or two recent "best-sellers" have been very poorly written. And an author like Leonard Merrick, one of the most "readable" of modern novelists, has never enjoyed the wide success he has deserved. E. M. Forster, author of that fine novel *A Passage to India,* is another eminently "readable" novelist whose reputation is on a much bigger scale than his sales.

In dealing first with the type of novel which

sells on a large scale I may be neglecting the ambitions of the beginner who wants reasonably enough to learn to walk before he tries to run; in other words, to be published at all. With a clear conscience I can gladden his heart. Under present conditions it is ridiculously easy to get a novel of any merit accepted and published. I am sure that the majority of reviewers will agree with me that it is hardly necessary to qualify that statement. So much that is trivial, fatuous, uninteresting, and appallingly dull is published every year that there is hope for everybody who can wield a pen or a typewriter with mediocre efficiency to join the heterogeneous ranks of our "novelists." Callow youths, fresh from the universities; women, young and old, with more spare time than conscience; journalists; film actors; parsons; clerks—all turn their hand to novel-writing. The amazing part of it all is that publishers should be ready to risk their money in producing these futilities.

All of which will doubtless make encouraging reading for the embryo novelist. At the same time the young author may reasonably be anxious to frame his work on such lines that it will appeal to as wide a public as possible. If only it were possible to supply an infallible recipe for the production of popular fiction! Unfortunately—

or fortunately—there is no royal road to success. It often happens that an author, sometimes a very well-known author, deliberately sets out to manufacture a "best-seller." He writes a story full of action, of human interest and emotional appeal, sends it off to his publisher, who reads it and is highly enthusiastic—and what happens? The novel is published, generously advertised, probably well reviewed and—somehow or other—doesn't "come off." Occasionally, it is true, the attempt does succeed. I cannot help feeling that John Masefield deliberately set out to write a "selling" story in *Sard Harker.* (I may be doing Mr. Masefield an injustice, in which case I apologize.) In this instance he has undoubtedly succeeded; but *Sard Harker* is, I venture to say, a *tour de force*—and an exception. The most notable instance in recent years was the success of *The Green Goddess,* a play written—extraordinarily enough—by the late William Archer. It is by no means out of place to quote the success of a play, since the qualities which go to the making of a successful play are fundamentally the same as those which cause a book to sell. The trouble is that, with a few lucky exceptions, no one can deliberately turn out a "best-seller."

No one can tell beforehand which way the wind of popularity is going to blow.

It is equally true, and perhaps even more surprising, that a novel in which neither author nor publisher has any great confidence, and which is launched into the world in a spirit of hope rather than of confidence, confounds all the skeptics with unaccountably large sales. It is becoming increasingly difficult in these mass production days for any novel to attain big sales without the energetic efforts of the publisher behind it. Novels that are simply published soon languish and die. But it does sometimes happen that a novel "arrives" of its own accord. Public taste is a mystery and always will be.

This aspect of the commercial side of literature will probably surprise the new author—if it is not actually bewildering—but it can have no practical interest for him. It will not teach how to write saleable work. If only as a warning, however, it is worth consideration. But, allowing for the uncertainty of publishing, it is, I think, possible to differentiate roughly between the types of novel which have (at any rate at the present time) a popular appeal and those which have not.

It is much easier to approach the question negatively. Fashions in fiction come and go. The pendulum of favor is always more or less slowly swinging, although its movement may not be clearly discernible. Certain types of novel will—

one is safe in asserting—never fail to find a market. The romantic novel, the adventure story, the mystery or detective story, the humorous novel—these are assured of a consistent measure of popularity. The psychological novel, on the other hand, like the "problem" play, seems destined to have a limited vogue.

At the present time I should say that the straightforward "good story" is most in favor, with a corresponding prejudice against the psychological and often rather morbid novel. Certain types of story are difficult to place nowadays: these include historical romances, stories with a religious or spiritual bias, stories with a strong moral flavor and "pre-war" stories of any kind (*i.e.*, stories in which the action takes place prior to 1914). There are, of course, brilliant exceptions. E. Barrington's historical novels sell in their many thousands, for instance.

For several years there has been a strong prejudice against volumes of short stories. Signs are not wanting that this prejudice is fast disappearing, but to-day there are very few publishers who will take the risk of publishing short stories in book form unless the author is already a novelist of some reputation. This prejudice on the part of publishers is easy to understand, for they know from experience that, generally speak-

ing, the public will not buy volumes of short stories. A very well-known novelist of my acquaintance, whose novels touch the thirty to forty thousand mark in sales, also excels in the more difficult art of the short story. Yet neither of the two collections of short stories he has published has reached a sale of five thousand. The fault lies with the public, not the publishers.

The public's dislike for short stories in book form is not difficult to explain. It is partly traditional (and tradition proverbially dies hard) and is the result of a natural reaction from the surfeit of short stories which the 'nineties produced. "Scarcely an author of any repute or no repute," says Rebecca West, "but wrote and published short stories. The better periodicals of the period, such as *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy,* as well as the worse, were full of them." For years after the boom of the 'nineties and the following decade publishers fought very shy of short stories in book form. They had ceased to be a novelty and the public soon demonstrated its lack of appreciation.

Then there has been the pernicious practice of issuing collections of stories by well-known novelists. The publisher is hardly to blame for this, since what usually occurred—and unhappily continues to occur—is that the author, having written

and published, probably on the strength of his reputation as a novelist, a number of magazine stories, collects them together and brings them to his publisher for publication in volume form. The publisher, being anxious not to offend his valuable author, agrees to publish them. This practice, while of immediate benefit to the author, if not to the publisher (who, in point of fact, often incurs an actual loss by publishing them), has positively injured the short-story market. For it is true enough that the average novelist's attempt at a short story is nothing more nor less than a "pot-boiler," and the public is sensible enough to fight shy of a two-dollar collection of pot-boilers. Besides, the reader has probably come across one or more of the said stories in magazine form and promptly resents the duplication, especially when he is asked to pay so much more for it. Very few ordinary magazine stories are worthy of the honor of book form, and if only authors and publishers generally had been wise enough in the past to recognize this fact, we should nowadays hear considerably less of the prejudice against volumes of short stories. The truth is that the short story is an individual and rare art, entirely different from that of the novel. Happily, the situation is now improving, and the next few years may yield

better prospects for good short stories in book form.

To return to the novel, it may be useful to examine briefly the various types of story which are likely to find a market at the present time. The following chapter contains a survey of many different types of novel, which may be illuminating to the young author, who, while conscious of the desire to write, is rather vague about the form his literary expression should take. It is, however, essential to realize two fundamental truths: (1) that it is practically useless to attempt to write an uncongenial type of novel, however strong may be one's desire to produce something saleable; and (2) that what may be marketable to-day may be commercially worthless to-morrow, and *vice versa*.

IF an analysis were taken of all the novels published every year it would be found that the love interest was so strongly represented that in any survey of different types of the modern novel, pride of place must undoubtedly be given to the love story. Jane Austen, it will be remembered, once defined a novel as "a smooth tale, generally of love."

We have already seen how important is the emotional appeal to the reader, and this is reflected in the love romances which crowd the bookstalls and fill the shelves at the libraries. The demand for this type of novel is therefore so wide that the novelist who wishes his books to become a commercial success can rarely afford to overlook so profitable a field.

The love story is not so easy to write as would appear at first sight. The novice is apt to imagine that, provided all ends happily on the last page, when hero and heroine duly fall into each other's arms, the chief requirements of the love story have been fulfilled. It is not so simple as all that. Indeed, the number of successful authors in this branch of literature is surprisingly small, and for

every one that succeeds there are a hundred whose work never gets beyond the "remainder" shelves.

An analysis of published romances will show that this type of novel falls into two clearly distinguishable categories. The first group may be described as novels of sentiment; the second more properly belongs to the realistic school. From a commercial point of view the former is unquestionably the more popular. In fact, many well-known novelists, in discussing the subject, have expressed their surprise that there should be such an enormous public for novels which are so artificially sentimental that they bear absolutely no relation to real life. Yet it is so. The reader—who, it is important to remember, is always the most important factor in relation to any book—is so obviously prepared to meet the author more than halfway that no writer need hesitate to put on paper situations which could never possibly happen in real life, and may confidently portray characters indescribably puppet-like. If anyone is inclined to doubt this statement, let him ask himself whether he has ever met, or is ever likely to meet, any human being like the characters—let us say without offense—in Ethel M. Dell's books.

Whether it is possible to teach oneself or to be taught how to produce a successful novel on these

lines is very doubtful. I am inclined to think that it is impossible. A curious, albeit a very valuable, instinct seems to be responsible for fiction of this character. Quite recently there has been an instance of an extraordinarily successful sentimental story written by an author who was still in her 'teens and who could scarcely be expected to have any real knowledge or experience of life.

If the budding author can turn his hand congenially to fiction of this kind, it is very probable that he will find publishers eventually bidding for his books, as the demand is greatly in excess of the supply.

To dismiss the sentimental novel as "tripe" has always seemed to me to be foolish affectation—often inspired, I cannot help thinking, more by envy than any real appreciation of the true underlying significance of its appeal. The author who regards his work as a business proposition certainly ought not to neglect so large a section of the public. The first duty of a writer is, after all, to entertain his public; and if so many readers desire to be entertained by the purely sentimental novel there is no reason why the books which satisfy their tastes should be despised.

It may be fashionable to decry popular taste, and to lament the fact that the public displays such a keen appreciation of stories of a low

literary level, but the fact remains; and while it is to be deplored that the intellectual stimulus of this type of story is practically *nil,* the influence that it exercises is, at any rate, wholesome enough, and certainly less pernicious than the salacious and unpleasant novel which unhappily makes so frequent an appearance nowadays in print.

The realistic type of love story is more representative of life, and consequently less popular in its appeal. The success of some books, and the failure of others, makes it only too apparent that what the public as a whole wants is not novels that represent life realistically, but novels which portray it in brighter and more artificial colors.

There is always, however, an aspect to be considered besides the merely commercial significance of a book, and no one expects authors who take their art seriously to abandon their conception of the novel in favor of more popular methods. In any case, such authors would almost certainly fail in the attempt. The novelist can only write what he sincerely feels; and beyond pointing out that the realist cannot, in the nature of things, anticipate so big a commercial success as his more sentimental competitor, little that is useful can really be said. It is outside the province of this cursory examination of certain types of novel to attempt to instruct any writer in the art or sci-

ence of producing any given type of book. Indeed, it would be impossible. I can only hope roughly to indicate the commercial potentialities of each in turn.

The adventure story next demands consideration. This type of novel is naturally more masculine in its appeal; and here again the average man's desire temporarily to escape from the monotony of his everyday existence is well reflected. The vicarious enjoyment of a wild West thriller is easily explicable in these over-civilized days. Open-air stories thus have a steady popularity. Indeed, the novelist who can establish a reputation in this branch of fiction can look forward to a career which, in point of sustained prosperity, will eclipse that of the novelist in any other sphere. The novels of authors like Sir H. Rider Haggard, Jack London, Zane Grey, Edison Marshall and James Oliver Curwood sell steadily year in and year out. The demand for good adventure stories may be judged by the fact that the demand in the English market alone for the books of one popular American adventure writer is large enough for an annual edition of one thousand sets of his books to be printed and sold year after year.

Here again the demand is far in excess of the supply, and the author who can turn out the type

of adventure or open-air story which appeals to this very considerable public is assured of a lucrative career. From a technical point of view the adventure story is not difficult to write, and although imagination plays an important part, it is probably true that the majority of successful adventure-story writers draw very largely on their own experiences in writing their books. This points to an essential quality in stories of this type. So much depends upon the realistic nature of the incidents and adventures described that it is tempting providence for the novice to sit down in the optimistic expectation that he will rival the popularity of Zane Grey. The public for "a man's book" is perhaps the most loyal public of all; but it has a very keen eye for discrepancies in local color and none but the experienced adventurer can hope to present a convincing picture of the exciting side of life.

Stories of the sea also come into this category. The steady popularity of writers like Clark Russell, James B. Connolly, Richard Matthews Hallet, Albert R. Wetjen, and, of course, Joseph Conrad, provides a useful pointer for the young writer with any experience of the sea and ships. Here again a real knowledge of the subject is absolutely indispensable. At the same time there is plenty of room for new authors in this profit-

able field. Over and over again it can be seen how specialization pays, and once a writer can establish a public for books and stories of this kind he can be sure of a steady income for many years.

The detective story is closely allied to the adventure and open-air story. It appeals mainly to the public that enjoys a rattling-good story, full of excitement and action. The chief ingredient in the detective story, and in its first cousin, the mystery story, is suspense. A good plot is essential; on the other hand, fine writing is neither necessary nor desirable. There is the same large and loyal public awaiting the writer of entertaining detective or mystery stories. For many years many thousands of appreciative readers have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the stories of such successful exponents of the art as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc (creator of *Arsène Lupin*), Paul Gaboriau, Edgar Wallace, Isabel Ostrander (who, in her lifetime, produced—under her own name and four different *noms de plume*—ten highly successful detective and mystery novels annually), E. Phillips Oppenheim, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, G. K. Chesterton (with his creation of *Father Brown*), Hulbert Footner, J. S. Fletcher, Mary Roberts Rinehart and many others.

The detective story is very much more difficult

to write than the ordinary adventure story. It has two essential requirements—an ingenious plot which can sustain the reader's interest until the last few lines, and an outstanding character which can grip the imagination of the reader. Very few writers succeed in achieving both these *desiderata.* Any magazine editor will tell you how difficult it is to obtain really effective detective stories. The average writer fails completely as a rule, because the strain of inventing a series of ingenious complications, and at the same time of presenting a forceful personality that captures the reader's imagination, proves too much for his literary powers. If I had to nominate one type of novel or series of stories which provides the most promising openings for new writers I should unhesitatingly declare for the detective story.

Some remarkably successful detective and mystery stories have been written by authors who have won their spurs with books of a very different type. Notable examples of these in recent years are *The Grey Room,* by Eden Phillpotts; *The Red House Mystery,* by A. A. Milne; *The Florentine Dagger,* by Ben Hecht. The point is worth mentioning as indicating the relative ease with which an able or experienced writer can turn to the detective story with satisfactory results.

As a result of the war there has undoubtedly

been a great increase in the demand for adventure and detective stories. The social upheaval of the war and the monotony of service at home and abroad both created and encouraged the book-reading habit; and of all types of book there was none more popular among the troops than the novel we are now discussing. Even the English Prime Minister of that day is stated on reliable authority to have read detective stories for one hour each day, however immersed he may have been in affairs of state. And the late President Roosevelt openly confessed his fondness for the detective story.

Turning next to the humorous novel, we find once more the demand much greater than the supply. The good humorous story is a rare bird. A sense of humor is notoriously a very uncertain quantity; what will convulse one reader with mirth will leave another painfully cold. The problem which confronts the humorous writer is to present the precise blend of humor which will appeal to people in the mass—a very difficult thing to do. Of all the story-teller's gifts, the ability to write a funny story is perhaps the most valuable. There is no royal road to success in this department; the proof of the pudding is in the eating. But the amateur who fondly imagines that it's a comparatively simple matter to sit down and reel

off a humorous story is going to be speedily disillusioned. The only sound advice one can give the would-be writer of humor is not to persevere if the result is not a spontaneous success—in the judgment of other people. The small but select band of successful humorists—W. W. Jacobs, Stephen Leacock, Robert Benchley, Donald Ogden Stewart, Harry Leon Wilson, A. A. Milne, P. G. Wodehouse—may be taken as both an encouragement and a warning: to the genuine new humorist a handsome return for his work, and to the unlucky recruit—grievous disappointment.

The psychological novel—about which we used to hear so much—has rather fallen from grace in the last year or two. The study of the motives which actuate men and women is naturally a subject of unfailing interest to the intelligent reader, but the success of what is rather loosely labeled the psychological novel depends so largely on convincing characterization that only in the hands of a master of the novelist's art can it hope to prove effective. Psychological studies without the framework of a good story are apt to be tedious and only a gifted craftsman can be expected to combine the two.

Scarcely anything is heard nowadays of the "problem" novel which, in the 'nineties, had such a great vogue. The older generation will remem-

ber the sensation then caused by Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow and Mrs. Humphry Ward. The problem novel illustrated the inevitable reaction against Victorianism, which, in its turn, has passed away. To the student of fiction the problem novel is interesting, however, as having dealt the death-blow to the old three-volume novel.

A type of novel which, although it reproduces the earliest form of published fiction, is probably destined to flourish perennially, is the picaresque novel. As no complication of plot, no artificial handling of suspense or situations, is allowable, merely a plain narration of events in chronological order, this type of story depends more on the interest of its subject matter than on treatment. One of the best modern examples is Mr. Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street.* In a sense the picaresque novel is the nearest approach to true realism, since incidents may follow one another in the inconsequential manner of real life. It is not an easy form to handle successfully. The reader has to be intensely interested in the story's characters—no easy thing to sustain for nearly three hundred pages.

The romance, although often attempted, is rarely successful in the hands of the novice. In the effort to achieve originality of theme or plot, the beginner is often tempted to try his hand at

the purely imaginative story. The incredibility of a story is not the reason for the failure of the majority of such attempts; indeed, the reader is perfectly willing to accept any hypothesis, however fantastic, if subsequent events in the story are consistent with the original conception. He will cheerfully project himself into another world, or will readily believe in the existence of fictional ghosts or weird creatures in expectation of a satisfying story. The writer's difficulties are obvious. He may have the requisite imagination, but he must be able to control it in a logical way, as well as to give it expression. The classic romances of Mr. H. G. Wells—*The War of the Worlds, The Time Machine, The Wonderful Visit* and the rest—illustrate the difficulties as well as the possibilities of this form. The publisher usually has an open mind in regard to stories of this type.

The historical novel is something of a paradox at the present time. On the one hand there is so little demand for historical novels that only a few publishers will consider them in manuscript form; on the other hand, there are the outstanding successes of authors like Rafael Sabatini, Jeffery Farnol, James Boyd, E. Barrington, Sir Gilbert Parker. Nevertheless, the historical novel is temporarily out of favor. One possible explanation

of its decline is the comparative excitement of the times in which we live. In more leisured days the historical novel will probably attain greater popularity.

An increased interest in social problems, and a deeper realization of the common difficulties of humanity, caused by the upheaval of the war, is no doubt responsible for the popularity of novels which reflect the wider aspect of human difficulties. A best-selling novel like *The Middle of the Road* must have touched a responsive chord in the hearts of very many thousands of people. The novel which is merely propaganda stands little chance of success. But the novel which, in the form of a story worth reading for its own sake (the point deserves emphasis), throws light on the problems of humanity is likely to win a large number of readers. We are no longer living in a state of superficial peace and contentment. Civilization has come unstuck, and there is a hearing for the writer who can effectively utilize one of the many social and other problems which engage widespread attention to-day.

The sporting novel logically belongs to the group of adventure and kindred novels, but is worth special attention. There is a very much bigger public for novels with a sporting theme than many writers realize. Special emphasis must

again be laid on the importance of getting one's local color right in every detail. No writer of racing stories has any chance of real success unless his details are absolutely correct. And it is fatally easy to go wrong unless one has a thorough knowledge of the subject. One quite eminent novelist who attempted and published a racing yarn a few years ago made his hero run a four-year-old gelding in the English Derby—a howler which would either amuse or disgust any English turf enthusiast. On the other hand, those writers who know the ground can and usually do turn their hands with advantage to the writing of sporting novels.

Juvenile fiction is in a class by itself. Only a very small proportion of the stories for children that are written ever find their way into print. It is curious how many amateur writers embark on their literary careers with this unpromising material. It is difficult to place, often impossible; and the prices paid are often absurdly low. And although it may appear a simple matter to write a story which will appeal to children, it is in reality very difficult. A few publishers specialize in "juveniles," but outside this number there is practically no market for them. The majority of children's stories are bought for an outright payment, which is not encouraging to the author.

Serial rights, however, are sometimes valuable, although respectable rates are the exception rather than the rule.

The war novel is an interesting illustration of the difficulty of overcoming the prejudices of publishers once they are formed. As was only to be expected, a strong reaction against war stories set in a year or two after the Great War and the pendulum is only just beginning to swing back. The same obstinate prejudice has prevailed for the past few years among theatrical managers and magazine editors. Yet the first war play to be produced in the post-war period—*What Price Glory*—was an instant success. Incidentally, it is noteworthy that film producers did not share the view of publishers and theater managers, as witness the production—and, more significant, the success—of war films like *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, The Big Parade,* etc. It is, however, almost certain that the war novel is on the point of returning to favor. I feel sure that several notable novels of the war will be published within the next year or two. So far the war has produced only a few outstanding novels—H. G. Wells's *Mr. Britling Sees It Through; The Spanish Farm,* by R. H. Mottram; Cecil Roberts's *Scissors,* of which the vivid last chapters entitle it to inclusion; in America, *Three Soldiers,* by John

Dos Passos, and *Through the Wheat,* by Thomas Boyd, and in France, Barbusse's *Le Feu.* There is a wonderful opportunity awaiting the unknown writer inspired by the war.

There are many other types of novel which necessarily elude even the vague classification attempted in the foregoing pages. Indeed, the novel is not something that can be labeled and tucked away into a convenient box. Publishers and booksellers do, however, attempt some such classification, more for purposes of convenient reference than for anything else. Provided this is understood, there can be no harm in roughly indicating, as I have tried to do, the prospects of each type of novel in turn. Innumerable novels defy classification, and of these it can only be said that they must stand or fall on their merits as novels. The novel is nowadays so elastic a form of expression that the designation covers with equal readiness the autobiography of a charwoman or the story of a man's life told backwards. The word novel may mean anything.

To realize how unwise it would be to attempt to dogmatize about any particular type of novel, one has only to recall an observation once made by an eminent publisher. In 1896, the well-known English publisher, the late John Lane, declared that "the sex novel was played out"!

A word is necessary about the "first novel." The risks of publishing a novel by a new and unknown author are greater to-day than ever before, but it is an encouraging indication of the real earnestness of publishers that the promising first novelist is most eagerly sought after. The novelist who makes more than, say, two hundred or two hundred and fifty dollars out of his first effort may be reckoned fortunate. It is the possibilities latent in his future work which tempt the publisher to speculate—for in nine cases out of ten it is speculation—in a "first novel." Some publishers are more interested in first novels than others and the writer should use discrimination in submitting the first product of his typewriter.

So many of the first novels which are submitted to publishers have shown a tendency to fall short of the customary novel length that a cautionary word is necessary. The average length of the two-dollar novel is about 75,000 words. Most publishers prefer novels not longer than about 100,000 words, but if a book runs to 120,000 words, even, its length does not put it out of court. While the publisher will accept a novel longer than the average, in spite of the necessarily increased cost of production, a novel which falls considerably under the average total of words is more of a problem. Novels are published at the

uniform price of two dollars, and the bookseller insists on "bulk." Authors would have an eye-opener if they watched the bookseller "buying." He looks first at the author's name and the publisher's imprint, then the title and the jacket, but never omits to note the "bulk" or thickness of the book, and the size of print and margins. If the number of pages falls short of the average or the type is unusually large, he has additional handicaps to meet.

This prejudice is really fundamentally sound. The public, too, like "value for money," and many readers will neither buy nor borrow from their library a book which they can see will not provide a full quota of reading entertainment. This applies particularly to books by comparatively unknown authors, so that it is important for the novice to understand the necessity for writing a "full" book.

What the future holds is a subject for speculation. Mr. Stacy Aumonier, who is a novelist as well as a recognized master of the art of the short story, is entitled to his interesting point of view:

> I think we may assert without fear of contradiction that a long work is not necessarily a profound work. A Tanagra statuette may be more beautiful and profound in thought, feeling and emotion than one of those monster conceptions of Mestrovic, or even than the Pyramids of Egypt. . . .

Mr. Galsworthy once told me that he considered that the most satisfactory length to express oneself in fiction is the story of between twenty and twenty-five thousand words. Now, coming from such an authority, this is an interesting pronouncement, and I venture to predict, having seriously endeavored to adjust Mr. Galsworthy's opinion to modern tendencies in fiction, that the next boom will be in stories of this length. It may not be for a year or two, but it will come. At the present time it is extremely difficult to be allowed to write such a story. Editors, publishers, and literary agents are not used to it. They say: "But what's the good of this? It's too long for a story, and too short for a novel."

Well, it is up to them to find a way of dealing with it, for it is undeniably an excellent length for a work of fiction, and there is going to be a demand for it. Mr. Galsworthy himself, and also Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, have all written a number of stories of approximately this length.

It seems to be the length that lends itself to a *tour de force*. It gives the author the chance of getting more stuff into it, more actuality, than he is able to within the limitations of the short story. On the other hand, he is not tempted to be diffuse, as he so often is in a long novel. From the reader's point of view, it has one great recommendation. It is exactly the length to read between dinner-time and bed. It is more satisfactory to go to bed with the vivid impression of one story on your mind, rather than the confusing memory of four, or the tantalizing impression of part of one.

In conclusion it may be said that there is an asset in standard length, yet no publisher will

refuse good work because it is shorter than usual. Among magazines there is a somewhat better market for the story of 25,000 words. The recruit will be well advised to stick to the full-length story under present market conditions.

Chapter Three: The Book Market

WHILE the novel may claim to be regarded as the most important of all the single groups into which books may be divided, from both the point of view of the number published each year, and the amount of interest devoted to fiction by the reading public, the field is almost as large for the writer of the non-fiction type of book. Indeed, in many ways the non-fiction market offers a wider choice and a more varied market than does the novel.

The non-fiction book, by which is meant all books that are not novels, may be subdivided under ten separate heads. They are: (1) Memoirs or Reminiscences; (2) Biographies; (3) Belles-Lettres; (4) Travel and Topography; (5) Technical books; (6) Poetry; (7) Educational works; (8) Political; (9) Economics; and (10) Translations. These ten classes of books, with the obvious exception of poetry, may be said to have one thing in common—they are all examples of what may be called advanced journalism. In all of them the qualifications required are in one way or another the same qualifications indispensable to success in journalism—that

is, the ability to describe scenes or incidents in the way best calculated to hold the reader's interest, a sense of news values—which is to the author what a sense of proportion is to any human being—and, equally important, the knowledge that enables the writer to know what to leave out.

This last qualification is as important as knowing what to put in. Indeed, any experienced reviewer will probably agree with me that more otherwise good books have been spoiled because the author did not know what to leave out, than because vital facts were not put in. An important point left out is easily discernible to the practiced eye, whereas the superfluous anecdote, the hoary chestnut in an otherwise admirable book of reminiscences, or the biography filled with trivial and largely uninteresting matter, often escapes the blue pencil and appears in print. The very fact that in most instances the nonfiction book possesses no "plot" worthy of the name makes this question more important. If the action flags in the middle of a novel, the first critic to whom the author turns for advice will detect the fault and it can be corrected, but in the case of books dealing with facts, or anecdotes, or the fruits of travel and exploration, to decide what is superfluous and what isn't is not so easy.

For the author who is aiming at success in the non-fiction field, perhaps the best advice is indicated by the old journalistic adage "When in doubt—out." A story or point of argument never printed is never missed, whereas a story not up to the standard of the rest of a book, or an argument dragged in unnecessarily, may prejudice the reader and reviewer and materially affect the prospects of the book.

Before passing on to deal with the various types of non-fiction book in detail it must be pointed out that not all of these offer immediate results to the newcomer to literature. Memoirs and reminiscences form a class of work generally out of reach of the literary aspirant, while in the case of the biography, this too is a field which may well be left until there are no other more promising forms of literary activity left to conquer. It is true that one young man wrote his reminiscences at the age of twenty, but the success of this precocious volume is the inevitable exception that proves the soundness of the rule which decrees that those who dabble in biographies and memoirs shall have a respectable measure of years and experience to their credit.

In the same way poetry must be left to poets, and even the most enthusiastic and talented writer must not expect to be able to take advantage of

whatever scope this field offers unless he is one of those fortunate (or should it be unfortunate?) beings who, for some mysterious reason, are born with the magic gift of being able to write poetry.

Despite these limitations, however, every author who contemplates a literary career, or who is now engaged in one, would be well advised to make himself conversant with the whole field of non-fiction books, in order that he may know how wide the field is, and how far it is likely in the future that he may be able to enter it to his profit. If there is one thing true of authors as a body it is the fact that, in the words of the wit, if every writer could know what he was destined to write when first he put pen to paper, authorship would have been numbered among the dead arts centuries ago. It is the uncertainty of the developments of the day after to-morrow which gives to authorship much of its charm, and for that same reason no field of effort should be left unexplored by the aspirant for literary reputation.

Memoirs and reminiscences form a steadily growing class of non-fiction book. They may be written by anybody or nobody, providing always that that nobody has mixed with the people who count, or in some way enjoyed unique experiences denied to most of us, and therefore interesting

when set down in print. Principally, however, this type of book is the work of some one whose name is well known to the reading public. Famous politicians, doctors, authors, business men, sportsmen, soldiers, sailors, travelers, clergymen, actors, war correspondents, lawyers—all these vocations have contributed to the successful memoirs and books of reminiscences published during recent years. To-day the great, and the nearly great, announce the coming of their reminiscences with an inevitableness that suggests that before long, with competition as keen as it is in the publishing world, the successful man or woman will sign a contract for what is usually a form of life story at an early age and thus be relieved of further worry, apart from the task of sitting down to produce the book when the joys of more strenuous activities have waned.

Indeed, this is what already happens in many cases. Miss Mary Pickford, the famous screen star, signed a contract for her reminiscences with a publishing house ten years ago, when, although famous, she had by no means achieved the position in the world of screen art that she occupies to-day. In the same way the modern politician accepts office knowing, and appreciating, that when his turn comes to "go into the wilderness" of opposition or retirement, there

will be a ready market for the book in which he will tell the story of his stewardship, with such permissible brushing aside of the cloak of secrecy as may add a spice of interest to the record.

There are, of course, some lucky people who are assured of success before they sit down to write the first chapter of their memoirs or their reminiscences.

Very large sums were paid in advance for the serial or book rights, or both, in the cases of Earl Asquith, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, the ex-Kaiser, General von Ludendorff, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Lloyd George, Madame Melba, and some others who have managed the destinies or penetrated the imaginations of great numbers of mankind.

But these distinguished authors are in a privileged class. For years they have been in the limelight. The public knows them and is eager to know how much they know in turn. So a publisher is justified in preparing a big first edition of any book they write. For the comparatively unknown writer the task is not so easy, nor the reward so great.

Anyone who has a story to tell, and can tell it in an interesting fashion, can write a novel. In the same way, anyone whose life has been interesting in a way denied to the average man and

woman, is qualified, given the necessary writing ability, to write his or her reminiscences, but the material must be there—it cannot be manufactured or invented. An interesting life spent in contact with interesting and famous people is a first essential. So is either a good memory for details or a carefully kept diary. Nothing is so damaging to an otherwise good book of reminiscences or memoirs as vagueness. If the book is sufficiently interesting to attract the very large public which appreciates life at second-hand in this form, then the monetary results will be well worth while. Most books of this description are published at from three to ten dollars, a price which, on a royalty basis, will well repay the author for the amount of research work necessary to compile from 75,000 to 100,000 words of interesting material.

Of all types of non-fiction books, memoirs make the greatest appeal to the majority of publishers. If you have any notion that in the years to come you may want to give your story to the world, start keeping a diary to-day. A little time spent in collecting material while it is fresh in the mind may save months of research and reflection in the years to come—and enable the author finally to crown his literary achievements by a successful book of reminiscences.

Biographies offer a wider field, and one which the young writer can enter on equal terms. Whether or not a famous figure in public life has written a volume of memoirs or reminiscences during his lifetime, it is probable that a biography covering his whole life will appear after his death. In many cases such a biography could not be written except by a writer who has the privilege of access to the letters, documents, and other material left by the subject of the book, and also to family records needed to piece together the early and obscure beginnings of some one who later became a famous personality. But there are other famous men—statesmen and politicians, for example—whose whole lives, apart from a few early years, are lived in the full glare of publicity. A complete collection of press cuttings concerning these men and women would furnish, with a few intimate touches such as any friend could supply, an almost complete biography of their lives. Here is the opportunity for the young writer in this field. As an example I may recall the somewhat surprising fact that when Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became the first Socialist Prime Minister of Great Britain, very few people knew more about him, outside the labor movement itself, than the fact that he was a Scot who had for a time been rather unpopular on

account of his anti-war activities. An English journalist, whose work had brought him into contact with Mr. MacDonald, and who had for some time past carefully studied the life of the Socialist leader with an eye on the possibility of good "copy" at some future date, set to work and in a week produced a really excellent biography of the Prime Minister. This was duly published in a Sunday newspaper and afterward in book form, and the results well repaid the journalist-author for his work.

It is, I believe, a fact that what was by far the best biography of the ex-Kaiser was also the work of an author who had collected his material from afar without any intimate knowledge of his subject. The war came, and he wrote the book, which went into several editions in a few weeks.

These are examples of the biography which deals with a living person. Where it is a life-story in the real sense, and the subject is dead, the task is harder, and generally, in the absence of special access to the necessary documents, or a very close and long-standing friendship, it is better left alone. It is not a field which offers as much promise of financial reward as many others in the non-fiction market, but a good biography, sympathetically and worthily treated, is an achievement well worth while, and, for that reason alone, a branch of

activity open to every writer which should not be neglected.

Under the heading of Belles-Lettres are included sketches, essays, reviews, and letters on art, literature, and life. This is a field which it is difficult to enter. Generally speaking, either a name familiar to the more discriminating section of the reading public, or a style and diction calculated to win respect on its merits, is needed to obtain recognition. But once this is achieved belles-lettres offer wide possibilities both in profit and in prestige. An example of a modern writer who has won substantial recognition in this field of non-fiction books is Mr. E. V. Lucas, whose essays, travel sketches, and criticisms on art and kindred topics have a wide sale both in this country and in America, and have so deservedly increased that delightful writer's reputation. Another essayist who has won an enduring niche in the affections of the readers of this class of literature is Mr. G. K. Chesterton, whose work needs no detailed description from me. Hilaire Belloc, Christopher Morley, H. G. Dwight, William McFee are other names which come to mind of writers whose contributions to the belles-lettres of our days not only will live after many modern novels are forgotten, but prove that this somewhat highly specialized field is well worth

the consideration, if only on commercial grounds, of any author who is determined to take his work seriously, and to leave no class of book unconsidered which may increase his reputation or his income.

A much larger section is that covered by the book dealing with travel and topography. Today it would seem that every one of us is either a traveler or a reader of travel books. At all events, the number of such books published in this country is becoming steadily larger year by year, and more and more of the "best sellers" among non-fiction books belong to this type of book.

It is obvious that first-hand knowledge of the subject dealt with is essential before a travel book can be attempted. It is useless to sit at home and try to write a book about the Solomon Islands, or the Tekel Makan Desert of northern China. Sincerity and accuracy in detail are the outstanding requirements of the travel book, and without these success is more than doubtful. Assuming, however, that the author has lived for some years abroad, there is hardly a spot on the earth's surface that will not, treated in the right way, yield a fascinating book for the stay-at-home public. A good travel book, especially if it is well illustrated with either photographs or sketches, or

both, is also reasonably sure to find a publisher, without as great an effort as is often required in the case of other types of books. Wireless, aviation, education, all these things are helping to make the world smaller, and to increase, therefore, the interest which the reading public takes in other parts of the universe in which it lives. Louis de Rougemont created a sensation with his remarkable stories of life in northern Australia (since justified by the evidence of the moving-picture camera) because no one else had been there and seen what he had seen.

That spirit of curiosity is more alive than ever to-day. In spite of the increased cost of the illustrated book since the war, the demand for books dealing with the romance of such parts of the globe as unknown Africa, the South Seas, the Dominions, the Amazon, northern Canada, and the Far East is still greater than the supply. It can almost be said that no really well-written and informative travel book is to-day a failure—no matter what part of the world it deals with, there is a public somewhere for it. But to win that public the author must do his duty. Exaggeration, invention, padding—these tendencies must be sternly suppressed. The book must be a faithful and full picture of life in the country concerned, illustrated wherever possible with ac-

tual photographs, or drawings that confirm or support the text. A good travel book of this description is usually assured of a large sale in England as well as in the United States, and more than one now successful author's name first became known, for journalistic purposes at least, through the appearance of a book of this nature.

Allied to the travel book dealing with one country is the book that deals with none particularly, but rather with the reminiscences of the author as a rolling stone, traveling the world at large and winning experience as the fruit of many adventures in strange lands. The market for this type of book is as large as that open to the travel book proper, but it is not a market which is open to every author, for the obvious reason that it would not be possible or profitable for a writer to spend two or three years of his life drifting round the world in order to write such a book. Unless, therefore, his experience has lain in unexpected places and the material is ready to his hand, the beginner would be well advised to pass over the travel book, merely noting its possibilities in order that if, on some future occasion, he gains a first-hand knowledge of more or less unknown parts of the world, he may turn that knowledge to practical account.

The wide range of books grouped together

under the general heading of technical books also forms a market which is dominated by the specialist. It is useless for the uninformed to attempt to prepare a book dealing with, say, wireless or printing. Nevertheless, it is a market which should be cultivated by those who possess the necessary knowledge. An author who some years ago wrote what is now a favorite history book for school use has for many years past been receiving an annual payment for royalties of nearly $7,000 a year. This is but one example of the outstanding attraction which the technical book has to the writer able to compete in this field—that is, a steady sale which may continue for years if the book is not of a nature which puts it out of date in a few months.

Just as everyone who is anyone could write at least one book of reminiscences, so nearly every writer is the master of one subject which might be turned into a technical book. Radio, tennis, cricket, dancing, football, motoring, gardening, engineering, photography, spiritualism—there is no end to the possible subjects for technical books, as is shown by the steady stream of these publications which flow from the printing presses to-day. But, to sound a note of warning, publishers usually demand a well-known "name" on the title page of books of this type—a name already as-

sociated with the subject in the minds of the public.

And there is a surprisingly large public for this class of book. Sales totaling 50,000 in the case of the cheaper books are comparatively common, while surprisingly large profits have been earned over and over again from the serial and other rights of these books.

Poetry is perhaps the most highly specialized class of non-fiction book. *Poeta nascitur non fit.* An author either is a poet or he isn't. There is a tendency on the part of many modern writers to dismiss poetry with a shrug of the shoulders, or a suggestion that poetry and poverty go well together. Yet it must be remembered that Rudyard Kipling has made nearly as much out of poetry as he has made out of prose, while such authors as John Masefield and John Drinkwater have probably made far more. There are notable American examples. The works of Edna St. Vincent Millay have had remarkable sales; Amy Lowell and Robert Frost and Vachel Lindsay have sold widely; while Eddie Guest and Robert W. Service run into the hundred thousand.

Following the war there was a "boom" in poetry—at least that was what it was called by some enthusiastic critics. But the only effect of the boom, if there ever was one, was that certain

publishers became a little more inclined to publish books of poems at their own risk instead of making the author pay to see his work in print, and recouping him on a royalty basis. To-day it is not always necessary for a poet of any distinction to pay for the publication of his work. If a poet has a certain reputation, or is spoken of as "a coming man," it is possible to find a publisher who will run the risk of launching him. But the field is limited and precarious. Whether the artistic satisfaction of self-expression is sufficient reward for the labor involved is a question which every author contemplating the practice of the poetic art must decide for himself. But, if money is the attraction, then it is undoubtedly possible for any writer whose work is worth printing to secure bigger rewards for less expenditure of effort elsewhere in the literary field.

Turning to the educational field, we are considering a wide market about which surprisingly little is known by the average writer. And yet this branch of non-fiction has one outstanding recommendation from the point of view of the young author. The demand for educational books is probably more constant than is the case in any other field. There are no booms and slumps facing the specialist who has won a market for his wares in schools, colleges and homes.

There is always a next generation to follow the last one, always the same "continuous urgae," as Mr. H. G. Wells has called it, toward knowledge. It naturally follows, therefore, that the market for instructional books does not grow smaller; indeed, it expands with the population.

The educational book, whether it is of the "popular" variety or not, is rarely a "best-seller" in the sense of running through five or six editions in as many months. In a conservative market it takes time to win your place as a writer of worth —time and a passion for accuracy down to the smallest detail. But if it were possible to compile a list of the fifty biggest sellers among books in this country, with the number of copies of each sold, the average author would be surprised to discover how many educational works figured in the list. Such standard works as H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* and Woodrow Wilson's *History of the American People* have established their position in the ranks of the books that help to make the man, and these books enjoy a steady sale year after year, and will prove vigorous sellers years after the meteoric novel published on the same day has sold its five or ten, or even twenty thousand copies and, its little day over, passed into the limbo of forgotten books.

Not every author, of course, is able to write

books of an educational or even informative nature. More than any other type of book, the text-book must be impartial—even judicial—in its handling of facts, sincere in its tone, and have a fine sense of proportion. Anything in the nature of hurried or slipshod work will effectually deprive the book of any chance it might have. Moreover, it is of vital importance that those who write to instruct, rather than to amuse, should have a very complete knowledge of their subject, and beyond that knowledge a vision of the lesson which they desire to present to their readers. The educational market is, in other words, a very exacting, possibly the most exacting, market. Nevertheless, it is a field in which there are rich rewards for those who enter it and make good. A book that once succeeds in attracting the public will frequently sell steadily for ten or twenty years, earning substantial royalties for the author long after he has settled down to write the more up-to-date volume which will supersede it.

The political book may consist of reminiscences, biography, educational material, or the volume dealing frankly with some specific problem or series of problems which engage the attention of the politicians of the day. The first three of these classes have already been dealt with at length in this chapter, so I will not discuss them

further. To a lesser degree there is the same sure public for any political book that imparts expert knowledge, or sheds light on any subject which is politically topical or of genuine interest. Even the views of comparatively minor politicians are eagerly read by the large public which is "politically conscious," a fact which has encouraged publishers in many cases to charge prices for these books of political reminiscences which they could not successfully demand for any other type of book.

Whether the problem dealt with is great or small, however, and whether the writer is comparatively unknown or famous, it is essential that the book itself should be a comprehensive work on the subject under discussion. Books of a general nature, written without the most expert knowledge, will never make any author's reputation in the political market. A complete mastery of the subject is an essential qualification of every author before he undertakes such a task. The scope of politics is so vast to-day that even within the great political parties each subject is recognized as a specialist's province, with little groups of members detailed to make themselves conversant with the subject dealt with by their own group. No man is any longer expected to be an expert on, say, housing, Egypt, and the prohibition laws

at the same time. In the same way the writing of political books is a specialist's work that demands a detailed knowledge of both sides of a question and a highly developed art of presenting a case.

The best way to write a political book dealing with a controversial question is undoubtedly to make it a measured statement of facts, attractively presented, and, after elaborating your views, leave the facts to speak for themselves. That sounds an easy matter, yet it is rarely so easy as it looks.

The political book which has something to reveal, or some bitterly opposed policy to defend, is in a different category. This is, for the author lucky enough to possess the facts at the right moment, probably the safest and most profitable book of any type on the market. Secrets have always had, and probably always will have, a ready sale, and government secrets are no exception. Robert Blatchford's *Merry England,* published in Britain and nine other countries before the war, is an example of this type of book. In the same way to-day, were this country suddenly to find itself threatened with a measure of prohibition, a well-written and detailed book on the whole question of the drink question, both in

Britain and in other countries, would almost certainly bring in substantial profits for its author.

It is obvious, however, that only those writers who are actively interested in politics and have made themselves specialists in their subject can hope to win either prestige or profit out of political books. It is, more than any other class of book, a market in which specialists cater for specialists, and where the lightest statement may be X-rayed under the fierce light that beats upon the party leaflet and the platform speech when a general election comes. A misstatement, therefore, may not only be damaging to the author, but it may and probably will actually set back rather than advance whatever cause the author has at heart.

Before leaving the political book and turning to its cousin, the volume that deals with economic questions, I would draw the attention of the young author to an interesting fact. With the ever-increasing size of the electorate, amounting now practically to adult suffrage, there has arisen a demand for political books of a slightly more popular type. These books are really super-journalism dealing in a straightforward fashion with the various political problems of interest to the man in the street. They are not intended to be text-books for the election agent and speaker

—they are aimed at the electorate itself in just the same way as the speeches made from time to time by the party leaders aim far beyond the hall in which they are speaking, to the millions of voters who can be reached *via* the newspaper press. This is a type of political book for which there is likely to be a big future, and one that the author, shy of setting himself up as an expert for experts, might profitably keep in mind if his politics are of the vital and imperative type that sooner or later breaks out on paper.

Like the political book, economics is a subject not for every pen. A famous statesman once referred to decimals as "those damned dots." The writer on economic questions deals with little else but "damned dots" from the cradle to the grave. The economic book should not be dismissed for this reason, however, as a market offering no opportunities to the young writer who is prepared to take pains to master his subject. The world in which we live is a far more complicated and industrialized world than was the world of fifty years ago. In twenty years' time it will be more complicated and industrialized than ever. And the more complicated it becomes the greater will be the need for books explanatory of human society and where it is going wrong. The economic book has very aptly been described as "the

guide book to industrial progress." Every year, every month, the trend of industrial development is slowly but surely changing. Now one trade is enjoying a boom, now another is suffering from a mysterious depression. It is the economist in his watch-tower who must read the signs that reveal the health of industry and give the facts to the world. And as the world, or most of it, lives by and on industry, it cannot afford to ignore the reasoned views of its prophets.

If a young author with a taste for statistics asked me to suggest the most profitable market to cultivate during the next ten years I should answer, "Economics, economics, and again economics." The world of to-morrow will see the scientist and the economist leading human progress, guiding the deliberation of governments and husbanding our trade and our prosperity for the benefit of all. A few years of study and the young writer will find himself on the threshold of an almost limitless field in which there are opportunities in plenty. Even to-day there are many writers who find it possible almost to confine their activities to this field, *e.g.*, J. M. Keynes, G. D. H. Cole, Edwin E. Slosson, James Harvey Robinson, Ida Tarbell, and John R. Commons, to mention but a few representative names.

The economic book is especially interesting in

that it offers an opportunity for writers with experience in industry to enter the literary field. Indeed, the greater their experience in the industrial field, both in this country and abroad, the greater the chance of success and a profitable career. That all economics are not for highbrows is proved by the success of *Eclipse or Empire,* a book issued during the war by Samuel Turner and H. H. Grey, which had a widespread sale both in England and in the Dominions, or, to quote another school of economists, the books in which G. D. H. Cole, Sidney Webb, E. D. Morel and Norman Angell have presented Labor's views on economics in industry.

There remains one more field which may properly be included among the non-fiction books. I refer to translations of foreign books into the English language. During the past few years the interest in foreign books has been steadily growing, and, with that interest, the field for foreign books has widened until to-day it is almost a foregone conclusion that any really striking book published in France, Germany, Spain, or Russia sooner or later comes on to the English-language market, and in many cases scores a success. Here the qualifications required of the translator are obvious.

Before an author can contemplate this field of

activity he must be conversant with not only the language of the country from which a book has come, but its methods of thought, its life, and its philosophy, so that he may interpret not only the written word, but the implied meaning of the book he is anxious to present to the British public. Translations of foreign books are too many and varied to mention more than a few, but notable examples of recent years include General Ludendorff's war memoirs, General von Bernhardi's book on the next war, Karel Capek's brilliant play "R.U.R.," and from Spain the political writings as well as the novels, of Señor Vicente Blasco Ibañez.

In translations everything depends upon the type of book it is proposed to translate. A popular work may be set down in the English language by a skilled journalist, whereas a technical or political book may need the skilled knowledge and practiced hand of the expert. It is a limited field, but nevertheless an important, if not especially profitable, one for the writer who possesses the necessary qualifications. It must be noted, however, that the free-lance's opportunities are limited by the publishers' practice of employing regular translators. The qualified translator should approach English publishers in the first instance. The usual arrangement is an outright

fee paid to the translator by the English publisher.

Another arrangement is for the translator to obtain from the proprietor (author or publisher, as the case may be) the right for a certain period to make arrangements for publication in the English language, it being understood that in that period he would make his translation, any payments resulting therefrom to be divided between the two parties. An alternative plan is for the translator to buy the rights in the work for an outright sum, but this is a big speculation under present conditions, and one which is not advisable, save in very exceptional circumstances, as the purchaser is liable to find himself landed with a book which no one wishes to publish.

The possibilities of syndicating extracts from any of the books surveyed in the foregoing pages should not be overlooked, as the disposal of such rights may add very considerably to the amount which the author may reasonably expect to receive for his work. The question of syndication, however, is more fully dealt with in a later chapter.

It must be remembered that there are many types of book—both fiction and non-fiction—for which it may be said that it is easier to find a public than a publisher. In the case of non-fiction

books a careful study of the requirements of individual publishers will save much waste of time and useless effort. Advertisements and catalogues are readily available and provide a certain index to the varying needs of different publishing firms. From time to time, too, a certain type of book—to take a recent instance, books on psychic subjects—will be found to be favored by one publisher or another and the qualified author may profitably take advantage of such increased interest in any subject.

Chapter Four: Author and Publisher

AUTHORSHIP as a profession is in the melting-pot. Every day we can see the art of literature being more securely harnessed to the chariot of commerce (or should it be the other way round?). The commercialization of literature has inevitably reacted in curious ways. Authorship has attracted many speculators and adventurers, some inspired, no doubt, by the prospect of publicity, others, more optimistically, in the anticipation of large monetary reward. Authors are not what they were.

To-day there are probably more aspirants to literary fame than ever before. This increase in the number of authors and would-be authors would not be alarming if publishing were the simple straightforward business it was fifty years ago. But to-day the whole business of book publishing has become much more complicated.

In the old days the author wrote his book and took it to the bookseller, who combined the functions of publishing and selling books. For his labor the author usually received a lump sum and the simple transaction was complete. The book was manufactured and had only a compara-

tively local sale. To-day the commercial side of literature is bristling with complications. Territorial rights throughout the world, translation rights, dramatic and film rights, serial rights, broadcasting, cheap-edition rights—all have to be taken into consideration. A book is a business in itself, and since the author is an active partner he should at least know something of the conditions which govern this particular business.

Very few authors understand the commercial side. Some prefer to remain almost entirely ignorant of all business details and concentrate on what they regard as the author's proper function, namely, to write. There is something to be said for this point of view, especially in view of the rise of the literary agent and the establishment of the Authors' League, which can and do protect the business interests of authors who are prudent enough to take advantage of their expert services.

The author who wants to pursue his creative work, without being harassed by mathematics and complicated detail, usually employs a literary agent. A later chapter deals fully with the status and functions of the agent.

At the same time it is not an undesirable thing that the author should be able, if he so desires, to make himself acquainted with, at any rate, the rudiments of the commercial side, and it is

the object of this book to survey the most important aspects from the author's point of view. It is hardly necessary to warn the reader that conditions change so rapidly that no book of this kind, however comprehensive, can hope to cover all the ground. With every year come fresh developments and complications.

The author of a book is, commercially, in a peculiar position. Although Dr. Johnson once declared that no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money, it is undeniably true that many authors, if not entirely indifferent to the financial return from their books, regard the money they earn (or do not earn) as of relatively little importance. On the other hand, writing is a profession, sometimes even a trade, and the author who is dependent on his literary income, or who is anxious to reap the maximum return from his books, should and often does attach great importance to the commercial aspect of book-writing. Between the two types of author stand the publisher and the literary agent. The publisher naturally insures his profit so far as he can; he is above all a business man, and when he publishes a book he usually does so in the expectation of making a profit—though not always, as we shall see. The profits from a book are divided between author and publisher, and only the keen

competition which exists among publishers and the vigilance of the author's agent prevent some publishers from taking the lion's share. As it is, the author frequently makes more money out of a book than the publisher. But the point is that the publisher primarily protects his own interests and he can do this only at the expense of the author. The literary agent, although he represents the author's interests, is a busy man and cannot always afford the time to explain the different and complicated phases of the practical side of the business. The author usually has a draft agreement put in front of him for approval and signature, and knowing his agent to be a trustworthy man, signs it if advised to do so. Fundamentally, the author realizes that the agent's interest and his own are identical. Nine authors out of ten take a contract on trust and most of them only learn by gradual experience the main features of the business.

This cannot be described as a healthy state of affairs. Let me state at once, lest any author imagines that the object of this book is merely to teach him how to extract more dollars from publishers and editors, that the true state of affairs will probably surprise him. It is dangerous to jump to conclusions in the literary business.

For instance, the inexperienced author may be-

lieve that the publisher grabs all he can and leaves the author as little as possible. Also, he probably believes that the publisher "takes no risks." He will find that the publisher often earns considerably less than the author out of a book, although he (the publisher) is the capitalist in the partnership. In what other business does the capitalist or financier earn the smaller share? Then again, it is perfectly true that the publisher is sometimes willing to incur a definite loss on a book, if he decides that such a policy will benefit him in the long run. This is not due to any inherent philanthropic instinct in publishers—although it is gratifying, in a materialistic and selfish age, to be able to refer to publishers who are actuated by higher motives than those of financial gain—but, as I have already said, to the extraordinarily keen commercial competition and personal rivalry which exist between publishers and to the authors and authors' agents who take advantage of it.

In spite of the inevitable uncertainties of their business, I repeat that publishers are often content to publish books without any prospect of immediate profit, and sometimes even at a loss. In view of my previous assertion that the publisher is primarily a business man, this may seem paradoxical, but in publishing it is necessary to look

some way ahead, and a policy that foregoes immediate profit in the expectation of a bigger reward in the future is not commercially unsound. Few publishers, indeed, can show a profit in a year on the books actually published during that year. The majority make their money out of old books, reprints, and cheap editions. But the new books of to-day are the old books of to-morrow, and publishers willingly continue to issue news books and novels in the hope that they may find favor and continue to sell for an indefinite period. Initially, the author is likely to make more money out of a book than the publisher, and although the author does not earn less per copy sold as sales increase (as royalties are usually on an increasing scale, he almost invariably makes more), the publishers earn relatively very much more after the sales of a book proceed beyond a certain figure. The cost of production —borne by the publisher in nearly every case— eliminates the possibility of the publisher's profit until a certain number of copies have been sold, whereas the author's profit, in the form of a royalty, nearly always begins with the first copy sold.

I stress this point, since many authors are apparently under a grave misapprehension concerning the relative profits of author and publisher.

In the case of a novelist, or an author of a non-fiction book, who is likely to produce further books, the same principle applies in rather a different way. A novelist, in particular, is in a sense a literary "property"; and, especially if the contract gives him an option on future books by the same author, the publisher will cheerfully incur a loss on the first book in the hope of recouping himself through the increased sales of subsequent books by that author. It often happens that a publisher, recognizing the promise of a hitherto unknown writer, actually loses money on the early books which appear under his imprint, only to have the mortification of seeing a rival publisher reap where he has sown. This is very unfair, although it may be thought that the author is not unreasonable in blaming his first publisher for failing to market his previous books successfully. It is only because authors do not understand and appreciate the initial difficulties that they sometimes desert the man who first recognized the quality or the promise of their work. It takes time to establish a literary reputation. The author who begins to "sell" with his first or second book is a lucky man indeed. As soon as he has a definite public, other publishers will naturally be anxious to bid for his work. An author with a

ready-made public is an acquisition to any publisher.

It is a comforting reflection that authors who thus turn their backs on the publishers who "discovered" them are, on the whole, in a minority. Whatever faults writers may have, loyalty is generally one of their virtues. One can point to many distinguished lifetime associations between authors and publishers—the classic instance of Byron and the Murrays, of Hardy and Harpers, Galsworthy and Scribners.

The writing of books cannot be regarded as only a commercial proposition, although the commercial aspect is naturally of considerable and, nowadays, of increasing importance. The personal relationship between author and publisher is bound to play a part in the transaction. So long as results are mutually satisfactory and personal relations continue to be harmonious, partners are not likely to separate, and it is satisfactory to record the pleasant and profitable association of many notable authors and publishers.

In these increasingly complex times, however, there is considerably more danger of the disappearance of the old personal relationship. Publishing is rapidly becoming more and more commercial. The new complications and ramifi-

cations of publishing are undoubtedly responsible for the widening of the gulf between author and publisher. It may not be possible to bridge it socially and sociably as in the old days, but a clearer understanding of the situation on both sides may well help author and publisher to understand and sympathize with each other's difficulties.

There are, of course, publishers and publishers. There are good publishers and bad; old-fashioned and ultra-modern; one-man businesses and mass-production establishments. Most of the publishers whose names are familiar to the reading public are sound, honorable people, with reputations to maintain. Their methods may differ, but they are thoroughly reputable. There are publishers of another kind, who do not subscribe to the sound old journalistic tradition that "what is worth printing is worth paying for." Their business methods have nothing in common with the real practice of publishing. Numerically they are negligible, but, as the unwary author may fall into their net, a word of explanation and caution may not be out of place. Briefly, their business is mainly publishing "on commission," as it is termed. That is to say, the author pays for the publication of his book. It would be foolish to pretend that there is any great harm in

an "author" gratifying his vanity by paying for the privilege of seeing his work in print between covers. In fact, many well-known authors have had to begin their literary careers by paying part, if not the whole, cost of production of their books. Particularly is this true of certain types of books, for which the demand is so limited that even under the most favorable conditions their publication must result in a loss. In these circumstances it is only reasonable that the author who wishes to be published should bear the burden of the inevitable loss. Many—I should say the majority nowadays—of the volumes of verse published are financed wholly or in part by their authors. "Juveniles"—books for children—often fail to find a publisher unless the author is prepared to contribute towards the cost of production.

The danger is, however, that the publisher who makes the publication of books on commission his sole business is apt to regard a manuscript not from the standpoint of its literary merit, but from the prospective profit to himself out of the money which the author may be willing to pay. Needless to say he takes care to make his own profit out of the transaction, and the "estimates" of the cost of printing an edition of the book are naturally framed to include that figure. This

criticism does not, of course, apply to every publisher who publishes books on commission. Many of our most important publishers occasionally issue a book this way, when circumstances justify it; and their figures may be accepted without hesitation.

It is foolish vanity, perhaps, to publish a book at one's own expense, unless it has merit and only practical considerations have prevented reputable publishers from accepting it; but the firms that trade on human nature in this fashion do not deserve the honorable title of "publisher." It is hardly necessary to make further comment.

There is a good deal to be said in favor of the old-fashioned type of publishing house. They have tradition behind them, and tradition counts in the publishing world. Booksellers are a conservative race, and the publisher of long and honorable standing, who has the reputation of not publishing books lightly, holds a high place in the estimation of "the trade." As a bookseller recently remarked to me, "So-and-so's don't publish many books, but when they do you may be sure they're worth looking at. No sausage-machine stuff here, sir!" The imprint of the older school of publisher, naturally, is more appropriate to some books than others. Dignity and impu-

dence may mix well in an oil-painting, but are sure to come to grief in the publishing business.

It is commonly supposed (generally by their contemptuous go-ahead young rivals) that the old-established publishing firms cannot and do not keep pace with the times and, as a result, cannot sell their books. This is, I think, a mistaken view. It does not follow that tradition and dignity are incompatible with salesmanship. In some respects —notably in advertising—the older houses may not be so enterprising as the younger generation, but the tendency to regard everything over twenty-five years old as a "back number" is an error of judgment.

"It is idle to deny," as W. B. Maxwell wrote in the *Authors' League Bulletin* recently, "that even in this world of chaos and lost traditions the imprint of certain really good publishers has a prestige, if it does not quite bestow a cachet. The first question a reader asks of an author is, 'Who is your publisher?' and if one is able to reply 'So-and-so' or 'Such-and-such,' it has the same comforting sound as when one says one is a member of a still venerable and select club."

The new school of publishers is an interesting phenomenon. Their policy is frankly commercial. Modern methods of salesmanship and advertising, and a preference for quantity rather

than quality, have taken the field. They are out to sell books—a worthy and laudable ambition, let it be said—and the margin of profit on their turnover is more important to them than the literary quality of their authors' work. If there is any prospect of developing an author into a commercial success, that is their primary concern. Let us be honest with ourselves and admit that many authors share the same point of view. Not, perhaps, for the same reasons, since to an author bigger sales mean wider appreciation—a factor which the author, if he be human, is bound to take into consideration. The publisher who advertises extensively makes a strong appeal to a large number of authors, and their names will often be found in his list on this account. An author chooses his publisher (when he is in a position to do so) for various reasons: (1) the terms the publisher is prepared to pay; (2) his commercial activity, *viz.*, organization and sales machinery; (3) advertising as distinct from salesmanship, although it is a contributory factor; (4) the quality of the publisher's book production (a more important point this than some publishers realize); and (5) last, but not least, the publisher's courtesy towards his authors.

The wise publisher is he who realizes that the average author is not a business man. Authors

are temperamental, sometimes to the point of eccentricity, and many a valuable author has been lost to a publisher who failed to be human, as well as business-like—a difficult but not impossible combination—in his dealings with the said author.

The actual contract is not nearly so important as many authors believe. To my mind it represents, roughly, about forty per cent in the case of the averagely successful book. (As soon as a book progresses beyond the ordinarily successful stage the terms of the contract naturally become more and more significant.) Infinitely more important than the amount of the advance and the actual figure of the royalty is the ability of the publisher to sell books. Few authors realize this. To put it in a nutshell, it is better policy for an author to take a $200 advance and a ten-per-cent royalty from the publisher who can sell, say, six thousand copies of his novel, than to accept $500 and a more tempting royalty scale from a publisher whose limited organization will sell only 3,000 copies.

Many authors prefer certain publishers to others on account of the better quality of their book production. One result of the great increase in the number of books published has been, in certain instances, a deplorable lowering of the

standard of production. Some English publishers particularly have never recovered from the war period, when inferior paper and inefficient printing and binding were inevitable. Although there are a few English publishers who can manufacture an artistic book, the American standard of book production is undoubtedly higher. Recently, however, there has been an appreciable improvement in the quality of book production. As a rule, it is only the publisher who produces a limited number of books who can make a really good book. Careful production takes time.

In this survey of publishers we are necessarily putting the commencing author out of court for the time being, and considering the publisher from the angle of the author whose public is more or less established. Such authors are, up to a point, in a position to choose their publishers; but the considerations which influence their decision naturally have some interest for authors still unknown.

At a certain stage in his career the average author finds himself confronted with this problem, Should he remain with his original publisher? The loyalty of authors to their original publishers has already been touched upon. The author who remains with the same publisher benefits in a practical way. The booksellers, who are

a very conservative body, always know from whom to order that author's books, and there is no doubt that the continuance of an author's name under the same publisher's imprint gives a favorable impression to "the trade." The author who goes from one publisher to another is, on the other hand, regarded with disfavor; there is always the underlying suspicion that the publisher has been only too glad to let the author go.

The publisher, too, can afford to advertise that author and his books steadily and thoroughly, for he is improving his own property. He can also afford to bring out cheap editions of the author's earlier books and keep them in print. In short, he can, and does, "push" his permanent authors. It is worth his while. But authors and publishers are, in the nature of things, liable to come to a parting of the ways. Actual quarrels are, happily, of rare occurrence. But, as W. B. Maxwell says:

> Authors leave publishers for many reasons, just as wives leave husbands. They leave because they think they are not being properly treated—that somebody else is being preferred to them—that in such an atmosphere they will never get an adequate chance of full self-expression. Sometimes they change their publishers merely from what may be described as night fears. They believe, quite baselessly, that the publisher has sold three large editions and accounted for only two meager ones, that he did not "remain-

der" that masterpiece, but disposed of it at the ordinary price. They leave because, staring them in the face, there is the obvious fact that a new book to a publisher is a very small affair, while to them it is a very big one, since they are only going to write twenty more books and the publisher is going to publish ten thousand. They leave because their publisher is well satisfied with the modest measure of success they have obtained, while they are profoundly dissatisfied. They leave because of the sickness of hope deferred. They leave because other publishers are persistently beckoning and luring—not because, as the deserted publisher always thinks, a purse was rattled before their greedy eyes, but because a confident promise of improvement was given. They leave publishers in a large way of business because they are at last persuaded that their books get no proper show in an overcrowded list; they leave small firms because they have come to the conclusion that only the big capital, wide organization and up-to-date management of a great concern can do them any good.

Is a big firm preferable to a small publisher? The question raises some interesting issues. The small publisher, it is true, can and often does devote more time and attention to the comparatively few boks and authors on his list than his bigger rival can afford. In some respects publishing is still a personal business. The old author-and-publisher relationship, although fast disappearing as a result of new conditions, still survives, and to many authors this sympathetic contact is an important consideration. An author

likes to feel that the publisher takes a keen personal interest in his work. He naturally doesn't like his precious books, the children of his brain, to be treated merely as merchandise and the subject only of profit and loss accounts. There is also another important consideration. The author who has earned a reputation often prefers to head the smaller publisher's list rather than to be one of many authors with equally considerable reputations in the list of the bigger publishers. It would not be fair to claim for the small publisher the facilities which his larger-scale competitor can often obtain, but for prestige and efficiency he is at no disadvantage. There is thus a great deal to be said in favor of the small publisher.

On the other hand, big firms of publishers offer certain advantages. First, their imprint often carries more weight with the bookseller than the quality of the book may deserve; for the bookseller is aware that the publisher can afford to advertise the book more generously and thus stimulate, if not actually create, a demand. This policy of spending money on pushing a book, sometimes out of all proportion to its immediate returns, also reacts to an extent on reviewers, with the result that the author gets additional publicity. In the hands of a big publisher an author knows, if his book is fortunate enough to

show signs of developing into a "best-seller," that the publisher will readily spend large sums of money on additional advertising appropriations, trade letters and circulars, and that the whole weight of his selling organization will be thrown into the scale on his book's behalf. His relations with the publisher may be, and usually are, less intimate, but there are many practical advantages.

Publishing is work of infinite variety, [said a writer recently in *Constable's Monthly List,* the clever house organ of the English firm of Constable & Co., Ltd.]. It is a life of personal contacts, continual adjustment of circumstance to temperament, and, above all, of endless varying detail. No two books are identical, any more than are their authors. It is not enough to contract for six biographies, six books of travel, and two dozen novels, and, having decided on a style in which each genre shall be produced, to put them on the market with mechanical efficiency. Efficiency in publishing is like efficiency in motherhood. It must have the business qualities of punctuality and knowledge and orderly control; but it must also have sympathy and a quick sense of the individuality of each growing child. You will ask, then, whether the ideal publisher exists. Probably not. But an author who can gauge his man will, if he has a sense of what a publisher should do, know how much reasonably to expect. From the publisher, who is also an educated being and of himself congenial, he will get advice that may not only make his book more saleable, but even improve it as a book. Mutual dealings will be pleasant, and the author's stringencies will find a generous friend when most they need it. Yet on occasions the literary publisher may seem

unduly diffident in exploitation of the market, or unskillful (whether from lack of capital or enterprise) in large-scale operations. The competent commercialist, on the other hand, will give an author accurate and rapid service in matters technical, but the next moment wound his susceptibilities by vulgar boosting, or in some other point of mutual dealing act with obtuseness, lack of courtesy, or sudden jarring parsimony. In default, therefore, of perfection, writers should perhaps decide which failing in a publisher they are most prepared to tolerate—and choose accordingly.

Among authors and publishers the significance of different publishers' imprints is obvious. The mere name of a publisher conveys to anyone with professional associations the whole of his reputation and current activities. But it is important to remember that the imprint rarely conveys any meaning to the public.

It is a difficult as well as a delicate matter to try and convince a publisher that to the average reader all books look alike, that the title and the author's name are practically all that matter. They don't believe it; on the contrary, they rather pathetically invest the individual imprint with a degree of importance which, facts being facts, unfortunately is at present far from being justified.

Present-day advertising, however, undoubtedly reveals the degree of importance which most pub-

lishers attach to their own imprints. English publishers are especially sinners in this respect.

At first sight the tendency seems on all-fours with the notion of inflated self-importance which inspires (if so dignified a word may be applied to it) theatrical managements to print their own names in type not less than, say, three times the size of the type allotted to that of the mere author. This, however, is doing considerable injustice to the publisher, who, to give him his due, is generally a more intelligent and cultured citizen than the average. When he emphasizes his own imprint he does so for various reasons.

In the first place, his most important customers are the booksellers, and his imprint is of obvious significance to the bookseller. Apart from the practical purpose of informing the trade that he publishes certain books and certain authors, he realizes the importance of impressing the bookseller. To this extent imprint advertising is completely justifiable. Experience soon convinces the most retiring of publishers that modesty is unprofitable in "trade" announcements.

When it is a question of general press advertising, however, the same hidebound tendency reveals itself. I use the word "hidebound" advisedly, since the too-lavish use of the imprint is so often merely imitative. Jones doesn't like to

be outdone by Robinson; and Brown goes one better by using 48-point type instead of the other's 36-point. This may be natural vanity but—under present conditions—it seems to me a waste of valuable space.

I am convinced that, were it possible to take a referendum on the point, at least ninety per cent of what we call the reading public would not only deny that they were influenced to any extent by the publisher's imprint, but that they would be utterly unable to say offhand who published any of the last half-dozen books they had read.

For this state of affairs the publishers have chiefly the uniformity of book production to thank. One book, to the lay eye, looks very much like another. Apart from special gift books, a book has to be exceptionally well produced to evoke even mild praise from the reader. If it does happen to stir his favorable comment, your average reader pauses a moment to look critically at the binding, imposition or paper, or whatever it may be that pleases his fancy, to think or even to murmur, "Why, this is a nice-looking book." But even then he may not take the trouble to look at the publisher's imprint. On the other hand, if a book is so badly manufactured that the binding comes apart in his hands, or the pagination is wrong, or the leaves fall out, only in such extremes

will he vent his verbal wrath on the man that made such a shoddy book. And even then he may not take the trouble to look at the publisher's imprint.

Even should he do so, I doubt whether the name registers any permanent impression on his mind. I must repeat that it is hard for those who are actively concerned in book-making to realize that we are, like all experts, in a tiny minority; we make a mental trinity of title, author, and publisher, but to the reader who walks into a bookstore there is always a missing link in that trinity. There are, of course, a discriminating few in addition to those professionally interested; but when you add together the numbers of those who to any degree are influenced by publishers' imprints, you have but a negligible percentage of readers of books. The fact is that the great reading public is indifferent—thanks, as I have said, to the uniform standard of production and price—to the name of the man who manufactured the book.

Yet the man who manufactured the book is also the man who selected that book for publication. And that brings us to a point very important in consideration of this question of imprints. When a magazine becomes favorably known and increases its circulation no one will deny that its success is due in large measure to its governing

editorial policy. The consistent selection of good stories—good in the sense that they are enjoyed by that section of the public for which the magazine is intended—brings highly satisfactory results. Our fortunate magazine acquires a reputation, and benefits accordingly. Why then, since the publisher's imprint corresponds to the magazine title, should not a publishing firm prosper on similar lines? There are many reasons; first, books in themselves provide practically no scope for originality—a variation in the color and design of the binding, a striking wrapper maybe, or a particularly happy title—and, secondly, the astonishing variations of taste which inevitably exist in the selection of books make it impossible to reduce them to a defined standard, high or low. The trouble is that you can't—with one or two exceptions—locate a book public. The exceptions include, without doubt, two types of fiction which are assured of a certain measure of popularity—detective and mystery novels. Any publisher featuring this type of novel would, by steadily associating his imprint with good mystery or detective stories, *in time* create a distinct demand for books bearing his name. But he would have to publish these stories exclusively and to preserve a high standard of quality. With novels of general interest, and serious books, too, where

the author is comparatively unknown, every publisher knows that he is, up to a point, taking a gamble. You can't tell a "good" book beforehand in the same way that you can tell a good magazine story.

But these are minor reasons. The fundamental reason—and one which I think goes to the root of the whole matter—is that the publisher expects the public to run before it can walk. Before the public can discriminate between one publisher's books and another's—and it is difficult enough in these days when publishers' lists, like the dear old curate's egg, answer to the description of being good in parts—it is necessary to educate the public up to buying and reading more books.

It has been found impracticable to induce publishers to combine with the object of creating, by co-operative advertising, an increased demand for books as books. One or two bold pioneers have been trying—in vain—to persuade the publisher that it is to his ultimate advantage to inculcate the book-reading habit. No, the publisher seems content to resign himself to a limited public. It is, I readily admit, difficult to sell books by advertising under present conditions: but to some publishers attractive advertising seems rank heresy; and as for a national co-operative advertising

campaign in favor of books—sheer waste of money!

The case for the imprint is admirably put by Alec Waugh when he says:

> Books are not after all chosen at haphazard. They are chosen because they appeal to some facet or other of the temperament of the men responsible for their selection; and in time, spread over a number of years, it may be seen that the list of a firm's publications does present an expression of the composite personality of the board that manages that firm's interests. In time, consequently, one does come to recognize the imprint of a particular firm as the guaranty of a particular type of quality. There are, of course, a great many books that would be equally suitable to a great many lists; but the general reader of acute perceptions comes unquestionably in the long run to turn instinctively to the output of a particular publishing house. If a reader can pick up a book by a new writer, or a writer who is unknown to him, and can from the name of the publisher obtain some indication of the type of book that is in his hands, then that publishing house can claim to possess personality. The author's name on a book corresponds to a label on a wine bottle: it is a statement of the contents. So should, in its much wider sense, be a publisher's name at the foot of it. We hear often enough some one say, "Oh, that's by So-and-so; it's certain to be good." It is the publisher's hope that one day he will hear some one say, "Oh, that's published by So-and-so; it ought to be all right."

But, wide as is Mr. Waugh's experience, I quarrel with him over "the general reader of

acute perceptions." To my mind, if he is not actually a contradiction in terms, in point of numbers he is so negligible that, to put it mildly, publishers pay him extravagant homage when they so regularly flourish their imprint in their announcements, and, as in the case of Mr. Waugh, are perhaps over-optimistic in their hopes that the firm's imprint will even in time attract the discerning reader.

Amid the vast and ever-increasing deluge of new books there is, for the general reader, only time for relatively few books; and, in the nature of things, the books of his choice cover many and various imprints. How then is he to gauge the value of any individual imprint? Indeed, by the time his palate has registered the quality of an imprint, it will probably have become insensitive through sheer old age—and by then the irony of the situation will almost certainly be that some one else has slipped into the publisher's shoes, with a consequent change of policy!

No, the imprint, although it deserves to be important, unfortunately is not. Books are not proprietary articles, and never will be. The imprint has significance for the initiated few (it attracts authors to the publisher as well as being of practical importance to the bookseller), but it is a meaningless symbol to the vast majority.

If publishers were to reduce their imprint advertising to 10- or 12-point type at the foot of their advertisements and devote the resulting saving in expenditure to a co-operative campaign to sell more books—as books—they would benefit enormously. Perhaps not this year, or next; but who is in business for just a year or two?

The imprint is, I am afraid, a fetish which common sense can hardly hope to kill. Publishers are notoriously conservative. But, as a final plea for its relegation to just proportions, it must be pointed out that the imprint is really only a survival from the early days when the publisher was both publisher and bookseller. In the old days, the imprint told the reader where to go and buy the book. To-day, with the bookseller at his service, the reader neither expects nor requires such illogical and loud-voiced direction.

Chapter Five: Approaching Publishers

ANY publisher of experience will tell you that the ways of authors are weird and wonderful. So much astonishing ignorance prevails as to the procedure in approaching publishers that much of this chapter must necessarily be of an elementary nature. Authors, even the best of them, are so liable to error in this vital branch of their business that even the simplest advice and cautions are necessary.

Some authors seem utterly unable to recognize that the publisher is, first and foremost, a man of business. As such, his office must be conducted on business lines. Yet there have been many instances of authors who have taken their precious manuscript under their arms and set out to interview the publisher whom they deemed worthy the privilege of publishing it. When, naturally, the author is received by some one in the outer office with the polite request that the MS. be left for consideration, the outraged author has been known to take his MS. and his departure promptly and indignantly. It never seems to dawn on these impossible people that the publisher can't spare time personally to interview every stray caller. Of course, it is just possible that by so delegating

the interview to an underling and thus wounding the author's feelings, once in a while he allows a budding genius or "best-seller" to go to a rival publisher. But, I think, not often.

One occasion in my earliest literary days I shall always remember. A certain author, of some little distinction—I think he had then three or four moderately successful novels to his credit—called at the office of one of the leading publishers, and it devolved upon me to see him. At that time I happened to be acting as a sort of junior literary editor, as well as being assistant editor of one of the firm's weekly publications, their publicity manager and various other odd things. The well-known author [*sic*], for this is how he introduced himself (I had read his books, but could think of no comment which would have greased the wheels of the interview), looked me up and down disparagingly, and said: "I take it you have no sort of—er—authority?" Impossible to reproduce the intonation. I replied: "Oh no, I'm merely a glorified office boy." To my astonishment, he said, perfectly seriously, "I don't waste my time on office boys," and out he went. It was a severe blow to my pride, but I am sure his departure saved the office a great deal of subsequent bother.

A considerable number of authors seem to be-

lieve that the publisher is inherently a rogue and is out to defraud the innocent author. Of course there are publishers and publishers; but I doubt whether a more honorable body of business men could be found anywhere. I have always found it difficult to convince a certain type of author that the publisher is genuinely anxious to find good books and publish them, and that that anxiety is so keen that he will willingly assign to the author a generous share of the potential profits in order to have the privilege of publishing his book. In addition, publishers will take unlimited trouble and often incur considerable expense in trying to find the MSS. they want.

I wonder whether authors realize the relatively important cost of reading MSS. which every reputable publisher incurs? Thousands of MSS. are submitted every year to every publisher of note, and every one of these has to be examined. It is true that the obviously unsuitable ones are weeded out in very quick time and duly returned to their authors; but what of the likely MSS.? Each of these has to have a more or less careful reading; many of them have to be read by two or three different people. In one important publishing house every novel of promise is invariably read by three separate readers and three reports are submitted to the fiction editor. All this

costs money, in the form of valuable time and otherwise. In the case of MSS. of specialistic or technical interest, it is often necessary for the publisher to obtain an expert opinion from an outside authority, for which he may have to pay a fee of from twenty-five to fifty dollars.

It would be quite logical for the publisher to charge a nominal reading fee when unsolicited MSS. are submitted to him, but, fortunately, the competition for acceptable books is so keen that publishers cheerfully undertake to sacrifice time, money, and labor in their search for good material. It is, as a matter of fact, doubly fortunate for the author that publishers are willing to read their MSS. for nothing, for any attempt to institute even a nominal reading fee would inevitably bring undesirable "publishers" into the field, whose sole concern would undoubtedly be to take as many fees as possible from as many authors as possible.

I do not pretend that the present-day publisher is a philanthropist who ought to receive the grateful thanks of authors; he is, as I have said, primarily a business man. He badly wants good MSS. and is prepared to go to a lot of trouble to find them. I do think, however, that many authors lose sight of this aspect of the literary business, and, if they took the trouble to realize

it, would be more ready to appreciate the publisher's difficulties.

So often one hears of authors writing resentfully to complain that their MS. has received no attention, it being a month ago since it was delivered, and so on. Delay is bound to occur, even in the best regulated establishments. MSS., like other things, have a way of pouring in thick and fast at certain times; readers are sometimes ill, or away. Instances where real discourtesy has been shown to authors are so rare that one can only congratulate publishers on their forbearance in dealing with impatient writers.

There is, of course, a good deal of allowance to be made for the natural anxiety of the author, but while the majority of publishers deal with the work of even unknown writers as expeditiously as they can, I cannot help feeling that most young authors do not know the exact position.

To begin at the beginning, then, it is obviously bad policy to waste the publisher's time. A manuscript can quite safely be sent to the publisher by post, preferably registered. It is customary, as well as equitable, to inclose stamps of an equivalent value to enable the publisher to return the manuscript if unacceptable. Reasonably enough, in these days when postage is a serious consideration, many publishers will not undertake to return

MSS. unless the cost of dispatch has been defrayed in advance by the author.

Manuscripts should be clearly typed on plain paper, preferably of quarto size, *i.e.*, eleven inches by eight inches. The paper should be white, not too thin, not too thick. Only one side of the paper should be used. This may seem very elementary advice, but if an annual pile could be made of manuscripts which do not conform to these simple requirements, I am sure it would overshadow the Woolworth Building. The average publisher's daily post-bag reveals the most extraordinary productions. Manuscripts on blue paper, yellow paper, green, pink, mauve, and all the colors of the rainbow; and of sizes equally assorted. Many are tied up with variously colored ribbons; some I have known must have been saturated in perfume; a large proportion are illegible or worn out even when typed; and an even greater proportion are handwritten. Can authors' optimism go further?

To the harassed publisher's reader a manuscript is just a manuscript. He doesn't want to be distracted by its unconventional appearance nor does he welcome the curious devices which some authors appear to imagine will insure preferential or more sympathetic consideration for their efforts. Such tricks only serve to irritate.

The author's name and address should be clearly typed or written on the title page or the outside cover of the MS.—preferably on both. If a *nom de plume* is used, the author's real name should be put in brackets after it.

One author (who ought to know better, as she has published several books) recently addressed the manuscript of her new novel to "The Literary Editor" of a certain publishing firm, and inclosed for his acceptance a signed photograph, not innocent of perfume, of herself. If she could have witnessed the reception of her unsolicited gift by the literary editor in question, who happens to be a lady, she might have repented of her inspiration.

The manuscript, then, should be a plain affair. Above all, it should be absolutely legible. Nothing is more annoying than a manuscript which is difficult to read. Although handwritten MSS. have been known to pass muster, I strongly recommend all authors to have their work typed. The difference in cost between good and bad typing is relatively so small that it is just as well to make a good job of it. The point is worth mentioning because inferior typewriting can be just as awkward to read as handwriting.

Convenient margins are a necessity. Many authors overlook this point. On the left-hand side of the page a fairly wide margin should be

allowed for, with an equally liberal margin at the top. Professional typists usually observe these points, but authors who type their own work are apt to overlook details of this kind.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced, that is to say a line of type should be separated from the following line by a line of white space. Single spacing is undesirable; after a time it is a strain on the reader's eyes. Some writers prefer triple-spaced typing *i.e.,* two lines left blank between the lines of type—and that is certainly preferable to single-spacing.

Should manuscripts be bound between covers? This is a question frequently asked. Some form of binding is, I think, desirable. It prevents the pages from becoming scattered and lost, and, if done carefully, does assist the reader. If, however, the manuscript is so bulky that its weight is not negligible it should certainly not be bound up, as the unfortunate reader may have to bear its weight when reading it, or carry it about. In such cases the manuscript may be conveniently bound in two parts. The binding should not, however, be permanent. When (as is presumably the author's hope) his work is put into the printer's hands, it is customary for the "copy" to be divided up among several compositors, who set

up different parts of the book in type simultaneously.

The most practicable and convenient form of binding is the fairly stout but not too heavy "instantaneous" cover which holds all the loose pages firmly until the outside covers are flattened open so far that the contents are released. It is thus possible to add or remove pages as may be required, and it enables the reader to separate the MS. if desired. When it eventually finds its way to the printer the cover is easily removed, and in his view the MS. is ideal "copy," ready to his hand.

Pages should be clearly folioed, or numbered, throughout. Chapters should not be self-contained in this respect. If, in revision, certain pages have had to be omitted, it is not necessary to refolio the remainder. If, for instance, pages 102 to 107 have been deleted it is quite enough to number page 101 like this, "101—107." This is a clear indication to both publisher and printer. Similarly, if pages have been added, the recognized device is to number the additional pages 57a, 57b, 57c, and so on, according to the number of the page they follow.

In addition to the practical assistance thus given to the reader, and more especially the printer, these minor points are well worth attention, since

their careful observance plainly shows any publisher at a glance that you know the ropes and that you are anxious to avoid making things difficult for him. Some authors profess to be superior to such little points of detail, and it is true that they are, after all, only a minor matter, but if they knew as well as I do how much experienced readers appreciate the author's co-operation in simplifying their task, they would pay them much more attention.

The procedure in reading manuscripts varies considerably among publishing houses. Consequently one publisher will be able to give a speedier decision than another. Some firms are noted for the rapidity of their decisions; others are equally notorious for their delay. No useful object would be served by giving their names. If the author has an agent he will almost certainly be able to estimate, from actual experience, how long any given publisher is likely to take in coming to a decision about a book. The point is, however, comparatively unimportant. The first lesson the commencing author has to learn is that of patience. There is, nevertheless, a limit, and the author whose manuscript (provided it is not of special or technical interest) has been under consideration by a firm of publishers for longer than, say, six weeks, is certainly justified in send-

ing them a polite reminder. If that becomes necessary he should make a careful point of notifying them of the title and nature of the MS., and the date it was submitted. If it was sent from a different address or under a *nom de plume* those details should be briefly given. It is useless writing to a publisher and omitting to give him your *nom de plume,* because his office may be so regulated that MSS. are registered under "Author's names," in which case your manuscript is probably not card-indexed under your own name.

When writing to publishers, above all be brief and to the point. A letter of some kind should accompany the MS., but only to state formally—and *briefly*—that you herewith submit your MS. (give title, nature of the book—*e.g.,* whether a novel or a travel book) and that you await his decision, and are his faithfully. The publisher doesn't want the history of the book, nor a recital of the motives that prompted you to write it. It is of no advantage to state proudly that it is your "first attempt at literary work of any kind" (I quote from a typical letter).

Of course, if circumstances are exceptional, it may be necessary to give the publisher some details. But there is nothing exceptional in writing a book—ask any publisher!—and unless explanations are absolutely essential, it is generally un-

wise to make your preliminary letter more than a merely formal one.

I have often been asked whether it is advisable to approach a publisher before actually sending him a manuscript, to ascertain whether he is likely to be interested in a work of that kind. Here again, if the book is of an exceptional nature, or if its importance justifies the author doing so, it is a sound plan. But to write to a publisher who issues many novels a week, and say, "I have just completed a novel of about 80,000 words which I should like to submit for your consideration. Will you kindly let me know whether you would like me to send it to you?" is simply foolish.

It is not a good plan to write and ask publishers why they have rejected your MS., and it is equally unreasonable to ask for any criticism of your work. Not that publishers invariably send MSS. back to their authors with a politely formal note of rejection; many publishers take the trouble to send a courteous, sometimes an encouraging, letter to an author when they feel that it is justified by the promising quality of the manuscript.

If a publisher invites you to go and see him and, let us say, suggests some alterations in your book, don't—if you decide to carry them out—live on his doorstep for weeks afterwards. Publishers are

busy people and don't want to be bothered unnecessarily.

Common sense is about the least common thing in the world, and authors seem to have even less than other people. Whether it is due to egotism, absorption in their own work, or to unbusiness-like habits, or whether it is considered so foreign to the "artistic temperament" which so many writers consider a desirable part of their mental equipment, I do not know, but a brief experience of authors and their ways compels me to offer the foregoing elementary cautions.

Chapter Six: The Literary Agent

THE literary agent is the most significant indication of the new relations between author and publisher. Publishing a book is a complicated business compared with the procedure of fifty years ago. Nowadays a book is a business in itself. Only a specialist can hope to understand all the ramifications of the business. With the complication of contracts, due to the growth in importance of outside rights in literary property, and the keen competition among publishers, only an expert can manipulate the one and take advantage of the other.

In bygone days the cordial relationship which existed between author and publisher was founded on the simplicity of their business dealings. Experience has clearly shown that when bargaining has to be done those friendly relations are jeopardized. The best of friends are liable to come to grief over business.

The agent has sometimes been described as the fifth wheel on the literary coach. He has been accused of destroying the harmonious relationship between author and publisher, but in some respects the exact opposite is nearer the truth. The

author without an agent is at a disadvantage in fixing terms with his publisher, unless he is satisfied to leave everything to the publisher's discretion, and that is obviously a dangerous practice. The author whose business interests are represented by an agent is enabled, on the other hand, to maintain his friendship with the publisher, to the satisfaction of all parties, including even the agent himself. Indeed, I know authors who leave things entirely to their agents, congratulate them warmly when an improvement in terms is secured, then call on their publishers and mildly deprecate the rapacity of their agents, knowing they can afford to be magnanimous—after the contract is signed.

It is, on the whole, a very satisfactory working arrangement. The author certainly benefits; the agent's services are adequately rewarded; and the publisher appreciates the advantage of dealing with a man who understands the business and can come straight to the point. Moreover, the modern publisher realizes that, although he may thereby have to pay the author more, the agent is, or can be, as valuable to him as to the author. Only the short-sighted publisher resents the development of the literary agency. It may seem putting the cart before the horse to consider first the value of the agent to the publisher, rather

than to the author, but a brief examination of the present position will best explain the enhanced prestige and importance of the literary agent.

In the first place, the publisher who tried to deal with all his authors personally, in the old-fashioned way, would have to restrict his business considerably. The agentless author would scarcely know where he stood with all the different rights in his book and would naturally and frequently come to his publisher to find out. The agent is on the author's side of the fence, and can and does explain all the various complications satisfactorily. In the old days the author went to see his publisher if any question arose in connection with his books; to-day he goes to see his agent.

Secondly, the agent saves the publisher a great deal of time and labor by sifting the wheat from the chaff among manuscripts beforehand. The eternal bane of publishers' lives is the vast quantity of impossible manuscripts which are submitted to them daily. To some extent the agent alleviates this burden. When a MS. arrives in his office, bearing the imprint of a well-known agent, the publisher knows that it has already passed the agent's often severe test of eligibility. But the agent's name on a manuscript is not necessarily any guaranty that it will appeal to every

publisher. Tastes differ so profoundly that it is not surprising for an agent to enthuse over a manuscript which makes little or no appeal to publishers. It is important to remember that there are very few agents who really count, and it is only their labels which make a favorable impression.

Indeed, the imprint of a second-rate agent is of no value to the author whatever, since the publisher probably knows from experience that that particular agent's judgment is not to be trusted. Most of the authors whose names are known to the public are represented by the few first-class literary agents whose names do carry some weight.

It is a well-known fact that nearly every author of note is to-day represented by an agent. The value of the agent's services to the author is so obvious that at this stage it may surely be taken on trust. Now the publisher's profits depend directly on authors; and if he wants new authors in his list—and what publisher does not?—he is not so foolish as to alienate the influential agent. The wise publisher establishes friendly relations with those agents—I repeat that they are not many in number—who can sell him the books he wants.

The status of the literary agent has improved

enormously as a result of modern developments in the book world, and the valuable work—valuable to publishers as well as to authors—in the past of the pioneers of reputable literary agency. To-day the influential agent is an important figure in the literary world.

There are, of course, bad agents as well as good; in fact the number of useless and actually harmful agents is, as one might expect, considerably greater than the number of worth-while agents. There are only about half a dozen agents with a reputation. The remainder eke out a living by exploiting the ignorant author in a variety of ways. The reputable agents, who do not advertise, are known to all authors of experience, to all publishers, and to nearly all editors, and the author who is in any doubt as to the prestige of an agent should make inquiries for some one of this kind.

The agent usually works on a commission basis, generally ten per cent of all moneys received by him on behalf of the author. This is the only fee charged by the reputable agent, and covers the negotiation of the MS., the settlement of terms, the preparation of the contract and the collection of moneys due to the author.

Those agents who charge "reading fees" are to be avoided, since, whatever they may say to

the contrary, all are fish that come to their net; whereas the honorable agent cannot afford to handle MSS. for which he does not honestly see a prospective market. The agent who works on a payment by results basis is obviously unlikely to negotiate a manuscript unless he believes he can place it, for, if he does not succeed in selling the MS., he positively loses money, in the form of time, labor, postage expenses, and so forth, by handling it, since he receives nothing from the author.

Unfortunately, writers are so lamentably ignorant of the ways of the literary world that a large number of unscrupulous agents are able to make money out of them. By carefully-worded advertisements they induce the unwary young author to submit his MSS. They charge a "nominal" reading fee; they diplomatically suggest that his MSS. should be retyped (by themselves); they offer to criticize or revise the MSS. In plain English, their first consideration is not to make money for, but out of the author. I do not suggest that because an agent charges reading fees he is necessarily dishonorable, in fact to charge a reading fee is logical enough; nor do I deny that the assistance of an expert in revising or criticizing MSS. is a valuable service and as such is entitled to be paid for. But, human nature being

what it is, there is no doubt that many unscrupulous individuals continue to exploit the inexperienced writer.

The reputable agent is often as hard to satisfy as the publisher himself. Since the prosperity of his business depends on results, he is naturally not prepared to handle more than that proportion of the manuscripts submitted to him which appears likely to yield results. Consequently it does not follow that the agent will undertake to handle any MS. It has to be read before judgment can be pronounced on it, and if the agent can see no market for it, it must perforce be returned to the author. In one important literary agency known to the writer the average of rejected MSS. is over eighty-five per cent—that is to say, less than fifteen manuscripts out of every hundred submitted are retained for negotiation.

The value of the agent to the author has been triumphantly demonstrated by experience, but its exact nature is not always clearly understood. Let us consider the main advantages to the author of employing an agent.

First, there are so many potential new markets that the author can only hope to reach them by enlisting the services of an expert. It needs a specialist to cover all the ground. Few writers even know what these markets are and what is

their relative importance, but it is the literary agent's business. He is in daily touch with the ever-changing markets for the author's work. Even in the comparatively straightforward task of disposing of certain rights only—*e.g.*, the volume rights in the English language for the British Empire—the agent knows what publishers are likely to be interested. He is, as a rule, in close personal touch with publishers and knows what kind of books they want, as well as what they do not want, and when they want them, and what terms they are likely to pay. Many publishers make a point of informing the leading agents from time to time of their particular requirements. The situation is constantly changing. The book a publisher may not want in January he will eagerly buy in September. If an author were to try to keep in close touch with his markets and thus dispense with the agent he would find he had no time left to write any books at all. There are, it is true, a number of authors who are in frequent and personal contact with publishers and editors, and to them the agent may seem less useful than to the ordinary author. But it is not so.

The author who lunches and dines with publishers and editors is apt to think he is saving a ten-per-cent agent's commission by doing his business direct, and, as he thinks, probably with as

much if not more benefit to himself. But what a short-sighted policy this is! What of all the other markets for his work, the full benefit of which—as they subsequently find to their sorrow—authors are thereby so often deprived of? Film rights, translation rights, different territorial rights throughout the world, broadcasting rights—all these potentially valuable properties may be lost or depreciated as a result of a contract between author and publisher direct. Not that the publisher is the wicked spider who entices the unwary author into his web; publishers themselves do not always understand the ramifications of the commercial side of literature to-day. This is proved by the large number of publishers who engage an international literary agent to represent *their* interests in the various rights they may have acquired outside their province.

The average writer is naturally disinclined to attend to the business side of his work. The agent, in addition to relieving him of the burden of business details, often contributes to his success as an author by protecting him from the harassing experience of continual rejections. The author's temperament is an important factor, and many an author who has eventually made good could not have worked so cheerfully and optimistically in the earlier stages of his career

had it not been for careful nursing at the hands of his agent. The wise agent is more than a business representative; he is, or should be, as it were, a literary godfather. Although a literary agency is still a comparatively young institution, there are already on record many instances of loyal and long-standing friendships between author and agent, and this relationship is in a sense more valuable to the author than that with his publisher. There can never be any conflict of interest between author and agent as there is often between author and publisher. The agent's interest is identical with his author's.

The ideal literary relationship is the trinity of author, publisher, and agent, when all three parties like and trust one another implicitly. At first sight it may appear that the author with an agent need not have any dealings with his publisher, but there are many points on which it is better for author and publisher to consult independently of the agent. The experienced agent realizes this. No author should be entirely a stranger to his publisher. The dictum, "Discuss business matters with your agent, literary matters with your publisher," is worth remembering in this connection, although it is misleading. Why should literary matters not be discussed with the agent? True, in business matters, the author

doesn't, as a rule, speak the language, and the agent has to act on his behalf. But in literary matters the experienced agent should certainly be taken into the confidence of both author and publisher. And he usually is.

Although it is true that the established agent is on friendly terms with the majority of publishers, it is a mistake to imagine that the fact that a manuscript is submitted by an agent influences in any way the publisher's decision. So keen are publishers to discover new talent that they give as much attention to the promising manuscript submitted direct by an unknown author as to one sent in under the imprint of a leading agent. While it is more probable that the agent knows better which publisher may be expected to be interested in the book, the unknown author is at no disadvantage when the MS. comes up for decision. It is equally a mistake to believe, as some writers apparently do, that an agent can succeed where they themselves have failed. An agent is not a miraculous person who can persuade a publisher to accept a manuscript just because he, and not the author, submits it. In this respect, the value of the agent is often greatly exaggerated, as the agent himself would be the first to admit.

It is when a publisher signifies his willingness

to publish a book that the agent most emphatically justifies his existence. If a book is up to publication standard, finding a publisher for it is not so difficult as outsiders imagine; but when terms have to be discussed and a contract drafted the agent reaches his high-water mark of utility to the author. The next chapter deals more fully with the various problems that arise at this stage, and in the handling of which the agent should demonstrate the importance of his rôle.

After the contract has been signed, various points are liable to arise in connection with the format and general production of the book. These the author can generally settle most satisfactorily by dealing direct with the publisher. There is no advantage to be gained, unless, for instance, the author lives abroad, by using the agent merely as a mouthpiece. When the book is actually published, however, the agent once more becomes active. In the collection of moneys due and the scrutiny of publishers' accounts the agent's services are most valuable. Here again his expert knowledge is of the utmost value to the author.

Does every author need an agent? This is a difficult question to answer, since every author is a law unto himself. Generally speaking, the agent is most useful to the established author,

since there is more scope for bargaining than in the case of the new writer, and more international rights to be disposed of. As a rule the beginner would do better, I think, to approach at any rate *editors* direct. Most writers embark on short stories or articles to begin with, and with work *of this kind* it is not of much advantage to employ an agent, at any rate in the early stages of the writer's career. Later on, when he begins to find his work in print with increasing frequency, the author can profitably approach an agent. In fact, the agent can rarely be of service in dealing with articles and short stories by new writers. He knows the market more intimately, it is true, but no young writer can hope for success unless he is himself more or less definitely aware beforehand of the likely markets for his work. Experience soon teaches that it is useless from a practical point of view to write an article or even a short story unless one already has some knowledge of the requirements of editors. It is like shooting without looking at the target.

The agent himself, reasonably enough, is as a rule only enthusiastic about the early efforts of beginners when they are of outstanding merit. Even then it is sometimes a profitable policy to advise the young author to learn to walk on his own legs and only to enlist the agent's support

when he has made some progress. He will then be able to appreciate the agent's services. Most well-known authors will testify that their first appearances in print were the result of their approaching editors direct, and that the employment of an agent was a subsequent and inevitable step in their literary careers.

The foregoing remarks apply only to early articles and short stories, which are very seldom the subject of a contract. A book, on the other hand, is generally better handled by an agent than by the author direct, partly because there is more scope for negotiation and also because the contract should have expert supervision.

So much misconception prevails among even experienced authors as to the functions and real value of the literary agent that it is essential to emphasize his limitations. If an author has submitted a manuscript in vain to the majority of publishers it is unreasonable and impracticable to expect the agent to succeed where the author has failed. Not even the most persuasive agent can work the oracle under these conditions. This does not imply that an agent is debarred from handling a manuscript if it has already been seen and rejected by a few publishers; it is a question to be decided by how much of the ground has

already been covered by the author and by the circumstances of the case.

At the same time it is a mistake to assume that the agent cannot create a market. From the agent's point of view there are two kinds of financially unimportant authors: (*a*) those who haven't it in them to do anything that can be made good to sell; and (*b*) those who have, but whose quality has not been discovered by editors and publishers.

Any sensible agent will avoid Class A. On the other hand, if he has any intelligence and aptitude for his job, he will work indefatigably for Class B, even without profit at first, in the expectation that his perspicacity and confidence will be well rewarded when Class B's market has been created. And the market has to be created.

The author's immediate market is not the public, but the publisher and editor. When an agent whose judgment is trusted goes to editor or publisher and says, "This is a really fine thing by an unknown author," that editor or publisher will set everything else aside and read the offering with hope—even excitedly—providing he knows from long experience that the agent doesn't make many mistakes about these discoveries. That is how a market can be, and in many thousands of instances has been, created.

But the creation of a market is not, after all, one of the most important weapons in the agent's armory. Circumstances are naturally against him in this respect. Although more and more new authors are appearing on the horizon for whom such service may be rendered, it is the rising and the established author who benefits most from the employment of an agent. The more important an author is, the more complicated does the business side of his work become. An author "with a name" is a valuable property, and it requires a specialist to deal successfully with the numerous and intricate branches of its management.

Let me quote two instances from actual practice. The first is a certain novel of international interest. These are the sales which were negotiated by the author's agents: (1) American serial rights; (2) English serial rights; (3) Australian serial rights; (4) American and Canadian book rights; (5) English and Australian book rights; (6) Swedish book rights; (7) Danish and Norwegian rights, book and serial; (8) Continental rights in the English language; (9) French book and serial rights; (10) Italian book rights; (11) Spanish book rights; (12) Russian rights (although there is no copyright in Russia, and the sale amounted to twenty-five dol-

lars); (13) Dutch rights; (14-19) dramatic rights in six of the countries named; (20) world film rights; (21-23) second serial rights in three countries; (24) Polish rights (a surprise to the agent himself); (25) cheap rights in Great Britain; (26) separate cheap rights in America. And that has not yet exhausted all the commercial possibilities in this novel.

The other example is a non-fiction book recently published. Its history is rather curious. The author, who is an English journalist, told me that he approached several publishers with a suggestion for a book on original lines. None of them seemed to be more than mildly interested. One publisher, in fact, was frank enough to tell him that, as nothing on the same lines had been published before, the proposition was too speculative. He agreed that there might be something in the idea, but declined to back his judgment. The author wisely decided to consult a literary agent, who urged him to write the book he had in mind before approaching a publisher. The agent knew from experience that publishers feel much more optimistic when the concrete manuscript is in their hands. The book duly materialized, and although eight publishers turned it down, the ninth saw its possibilities and made an offer for the British Empire book rights. This was accepted.

The ice once broken, the rest was easy. Part of the book was sold for serialization in England, and an American syndicate, approached by the agent, agreed to cover the American newspaper market—which resulted in the syndication of about two-thirds of the material. The book was published in England and proved an instant success. Three thousand copies—at 7s. 6d.—were sold in less than three weeks and within three months it has reached its tenth thousand. The book was an even bigger success in America.

In addition to these serial and book sales in America and the British Empire, foreign rights have already been sold to two countries and the field has not yet been covered. The sole calendar rights and the English cigarette picture rights were next disposed of. It is true that applications were received by the author in respect of both of these —calendar and cigarette card rights are rarely to be found in the most enterprising agent's bag— but, naturally enough, the author hadn't the remotest idea of the value of such rights, and of course placed the matter in the hands of his agent, who was well able to safeguard his client's interests and insure his reasonable remuneration.

There is still, of course, a certain body of opinion among publishers hostile to the literary agent. In a sense this is natural enough; but the

publisher who resents the intrusion of the agent on the ground that the author, as a result, earns more and the publisher less, is a poor sort of publisher. What has really happened is that agents have sprung into being mainly as a result of the development of foreign and other new rights and of conditions which called for the protection of authors' interests generally. Without agents who fully understand the commercial side authors would be in a sorry plight. Although, of course, there have been some instances of rapacity on the part of agents, I think the sensible agent realizes that, while it is his primary duty to get the best of terms and prices in the market, he must not kill the goose from which the golden royalties are expected. It is also part of his job to adjust and preserve that nice balance of interests between author and publisher which is so necessary to the successful outcome of their partnership. The agent should know better than to risk spoiling the market.

Another objection to agents, and one for which there are many sound reasons, is the not uncommon practice of playing off one publisher against another in negotiating an author's work. Such auction methods are indefensible. It is doubtful, however, whether any agent who values his reputation would adopt such methods. Price isn't

everything. An increased advance or a royalty does not in itself justify an agent taking an author from one publisher to another.

Not unreasonably, publishers are inclined to suspect agents of persuading their authors to leave them in favor of another publisher who is willing to put up a more tempting offer. Let us consider the position. The agent might reason it out that he would benefit by such a transfer. True, he would thereby earn an increased commission. But such methods are obviously going to alienate the majority of publishers in the long run, and what agent can hope to carry on his business successfully if his customers are suspicious of his methods? No; the agent must value the good will of the publishers, and this can only be retained by straightforward tactics. Backstairs intrigue may result in transient profits, but it is bad policy for the agent in the long run, and I think that the leading agents, at any rate, are fully alive to the importance of maintaining, as far as possible, the cordial relations which should and so often do exist between the author and his publisher. And, most important of all, the agent must act in the best eventual interests of his authors, and we have already noted the advantages (see Chapter IV) of remaining with the same publisher.

Nowadays the influential agent is in a peculiarly favorable position. Publishers and editors, being anxious to secure the authors and contributions they want, are constantly reminding the agent of their requirements. The agent is usually in the position of having more openings for sales than he has material to supply. For the right kind of work there is in fact considerably more demand than supply. It cannot too often be emphasized that there is, relatively, a scarcity of saleable work. So large a proportion of the work of writers generally is merely wasted effort, and consequently unmarketable, that the average author frequently loses sight of the fact that there is a genuine scarcity of acceptable work.

Consequently, when an author begins to climb the literary ladder, he rapidly develops into a literary property which becomes more and more valuable out of all proportion to his progress. When an author begins to "boom" there is no telling how far he may go.

It is at this stage that the agent's services are most valuable to the author. Provided that all the threads are in his hands—an important point this—an author and his work may, with judicious handling, be converted into an exceedingly valuable literary property. It is important that the whole of the author's business should be con-

trolled or managed by one hand, since only in this way can the various and complicated threads be successfully manipulated. For instance, the organization of a responsible literary agency enables sales to be made simultaneously in different parts of the world; enables the agent to determine whether it is wise to accept, say, a British offer for film rights or to wait for a bigger and, from the author's point of view, a better contract with an American film company. For it is not only the financial aspect that has to be considered. A publisher recently said:

> The literary agent works on the theory that the publisher who pays the most is the best publisher, and that no other quality beyond a readiness to pay has real significance.

This is very unfair to the agent who honestly has the best interests of his authors at heart. Money isn't everything, even in a literary agent's office. There are many other considerations—the author's reputation, for instance. The agent who advised an author to accept the highest bid for his work regardless of other considerations would be, even from a commercial point of view, distinctly foolish.

An author can only be commercially exploited with success by the co-ordination of all his in-

terests; and it must be admitted that this can only be accomplished by the big literary agent.

There are many literary agents who do not come into this category. The "one-man" agent obviously is at a disadvantage in this respect. The bigger agent has more influence with publishers on account of the important authors and books he represents and more influence with authors also on account of the extent and efficiency of his organization. At the same time the individual agent is preferred by some authors because they feel that there is more personal enthusiasm behind the handling of their work. Authors unquestionably appreciate the personal touch. They may also—the wisest do—appreciate the value of a big and efficient organization, and the best type of literary agent offers the two advantages.

Should an author have a form of contract between himself and his agent? This naturally depends upon the usual practice of the agent. As with publishers, it often happens that the agent who steers the author over the rough and difficult ground of his early days has the subsequent mortification of seeing that author desert him in favor of another agent, who undeservedly gathers the fruits of his less fortunate competitor's labor. To avoid thus laboring in vain some agents expect their authors to sign a form of contract.

The best type of agent, however, prefers to bind his authors solely by good will. It is the agent's business to satisfy his authors, and provided that they continue to be satisfied he relies upon their continued loyalty to him with the dawning of more prosperous days. In practice this policy is on the whole successful. Authors as a race are loyal creatures, and only an unworthy minority will desert the agent who serves them faithfully and well in their struggling days in favor of another, unless they have good reason for dissatisfaction.

To-day there can be no doubt of the desirability of the useful agent as a literary institution. The old-time prejudice is fast disappearing. There are, of course, still some people who sincerely oppose a development which tends still further to commercialize literature. But it is inevitable. The agent who knows his job is an asset to the publishers and of inestimable, if varying, value to authors. Generally speaking, it cannot be denied that the rise of the literary agent has given a big impetus to the monetary return to authors for their work.

It is not too much to say that the responsible agent has it in his power to further the cause of literature. By putting authorship on a more attractive financial basis, new authors are encour-

aged to put pen to paper, and while this may well be regarded as a doubtful blessing, who knows whether work of permanent artistic value may not thereby be added to the scroll of literature?

One cannot condemn too emphatically the worthless agent, whose sole consideration is his own immediate profit. To justify his existence the agent must have a sound knowledge of, and a wide acquaintance with, books and authors, new and old, and a keen appreciation of what is and is not worth while. I do not mean to deprecate the publication of work which has merely a commercial value; there are sound reasons for defending the production of books intended merely to entertain. The public has to be educated up to reading good books by a gradual process, and it is a truism that many a reader has begun by being absorbed in "blood-and-thunder" stories and finished up by appreciating the work of the acknowledged masters of literature.

The agent has, in fact, a serious responsibility, and with the growth of his power, an increasing responsibility. Authors, publishers, and agents themselves should recognize this truth. It is especially important that agents themselves should not abuse their increasingly influential position. Everyone with the cause of literature at heart

should strive to eliminate the pest of the undesirable agent, at the same time recognizing the indubitable value of the good agent. For when the agent *is* good, he is very, very good; but when he is bad, he is indeed horrid.

Chapter Seven: Contracts

THE day a publisher writes to say that he is interested in an author's book and is prepared to publish it is one to which every writer looks forward, especially if the experience is a novelty. On such an auspicious occasion the elated author is apt to regard the financial aspect as of minor importance beside the fact that a publisher likes his book and wants to publish it.

A form of contract—printed or typed—may accompany the letter. This is usually sent in duplicate, one copy bearing the publisher's signature, the counterpart for the author to sign and return. The author should give this document careful consideration. Every reputable publisher would want him to do so, but there are always one or two publishers who do not hesitate to take advantage of a writer's inexperience. They are fully aware of the psychological effect of a printed contract accompanying their acceptance of the book. The inexperienced author cheerfully and promptly puts his signature on a document which, he assumes, must be the regular form of agreement; he may, in his innocence, even think the terms generous. But he would be well advised

before signing it to submit to an expert any contract thus offered him. The young author who signs in haste often repents at leisure.

A formal contract between publisher and author was not always considered necessary. Publishing in former times was not the highly specialized business it is now. In the old days an exchange of letters between author and publisher was sometimes all the agreement that was made. Even to-day agreements are occasionally made in this way. Where author and publisher have implicit faith in each other it is possible for such an amicable arrangement to work with complete satisfaction, but unexpected snags are always likely to crop up. Without the mutual protection of a contract differences of opinion are almost certain to arise sooner or later.

The case for the contract is so strong that a few moments' reflection will convince anyone of its indispensability under modern conditions. Briefly, the principal function of a contract is to put the rights and liabilities of the various parties so clearly that each will know exactly where he stands. Much misunderstanding may often be prevented by putting aside sentiment and coming down to brass tacks. It is only fair to publisher, as well as to author, that the position should be clearly stated at the outset. The absence of any

formal agreement may appear not to prejudice the harmony of an author's relations with his publisher, but although the connection may continue for years without untoward result, sooner or later some difficulty is almost sure to occur. It is now generally recognized that a contract is essential if an atmosphere of good will is to be preserved. Every publisher has his own form of contract, or, more usually, two forms, one for fiction and the other for non-fiction. There are not, as a rule, many essential points of difference between one publisher's contract and another's. The phraseology or the sequence of clauses naturally varies. Some publishers like certain clauses inserted; others prefer to omit them.

From time to time efforts have been made, notably by the Authors' League, to establish a standard form of contract which will be acceptable to all publishers. Like all ideals, it can probably never be realized. The publisher's preference for his own individual form is easy to understand. It facilitates his bookkeeping; it obviates constant reference to varying contract forms; in effect, he knows how he stands in relation to the many books on his list.

There are four ways in which an author can have his book published. The first, which is almost universally adopted in the case of fiction

and books of general interest, is the royalty system. It is certainly the most favorable plan from the author's point of view.

Publishing "on commission" is a form of publication which does not interest the average author to any extent. As the phrase indicates, the author finances the publication of his book, paying the publisher a commission on every copy sold. It is mainly confined to books of special character, which, although they may be meritorious in themselves, have not sufficient general appeal to enable a publisher to handle them on the royalty basis with prospects of commercial success. Poetry is frequently published in this way.

If an author chooses to pay for the publication of his work he is perfectly entitled to do so. At the best, circumstances may amply justify his decision (it will be remembered that Keats published poems at his own expense); at the worst he is only gratifying his vanity in harmless fashion.

Unfortunately, so many "authors" are only too anxious to gratify their vanity in this way—alas for the gullibility of human nature!—that a special breed of publisher has risen up to meet their requirements. Most authors are aware of the activities of "vanity publishers." Many of them, it is true, are honest enough and do no perceptible harm. On the other hand, there are un-

scrupulous "vanity" firms which take full advantage of an "author's" ignorance and who make a good fat profit out of every item of their "estimates of costs."

To prevent misunderstanding I ought perhaps to make it clear that if an author's work is worthy of their imprint, many first-class publishers are prepared to publish books on commission. The foregoing references to "vanity publishers" apply only to some of the firms whose sole business is the publication of books on commission.

From a practical point of view the truth is that "authors' books," as they are known in the trade, almost invariably fail to show a profit. It is not to be expected, therefore, that the booksellers will handle them with enthusiasm. A good publisher will always warn an author who contemplates financing the production of his book, that he will almost certainly thereby suffer financial loss. If the author fully appreciates this probability there is no harm done. The danger is that some of the unscrupulous publishers to whom I have referred encourage the innocent author to believe that he will make money out of the venture.

The third form of publication is known as profit-sharing. This should never be undertaken except with a firm of the highest standing. The

author and publisher share liability and the proceeds from sales are divided between them, after the deduction of a percentage allowed the publisher for overhead and distributing costs. Under this arrangement, if the book proves a financial failure, the author gets nothing. If it should prove a big success the author benefits proportionately. The half-profits system is not much in favor and, from the author's point of view, is not generally recommended, as results are, more often than not, disappointing.

Lastly, publication may be arranged by the sale of copyright to a publisher. Outright sales of this kind are infrequent, but in certain circumstances are justifiable. The author who disposes of his copyright should do so in full appreciation of the fact that the publisher will reap all the benefit of any success that may come to the work. In the case of a novel, sale of copyright is very unwise, as subsidiary rights, especially cheap-edition and film rights, are quite likely to become valuable after publication. Occasionally novels sold on an outright basis afterwards become best-sellers—to their authors' chagrin.

As a general principle the most satisfactory publishing arrangement is the royalty basis first referred to. Under the royalty system the publisher undertakes all the financial risk in producing

the book. This in itself is an indication that the publisher has confidence in the manuscript. If it should fail to sell sufficient copies to insure a profit, the publisher bears the financial burden of its failure, while (it should be remembered) the author's profits begin to accrue from the first copy sold. Moreover, the author must realize that the publisher's capital is at stake and he therefore has every incentive to push the book and sell as many copies as possible.

The author's royalties are usually on a sliding scale; after the sales have exceeded a certain figure (provided for in advance by the terms of the contract) the royalty is increased. When the publisher has recouped himself for his outlay of capital and his profit is assured, it is only fair that the author should derive the maximum benefit which is practicable.

The cost of reprinting further editions of a book from standing type or electrotypes, as is customary in the United States, is considerably less than the cost of the first edition, when the composition—always a big item—has to be paid for. This reduction in manufacturing costs creates a bigger margin of profit, in which the author participates to the extent of an increase in royalty percentage.

Royalties are assessed on the basis of a per-

centage of the retail price of the published book. An ordinary royalty scale in the case of a two-dollar novel is ten per cent on the first ten thousand copies sold, fifteen per cent thereafter. Royalties on the English edition usually begin at ten per cent, but may rise to twenty or even twenty-five per cent. It is possible for the English publisher to allocate this increased interest to the author because his advertising and distribution costs are generally on a much lower scale than is possible here.

Copies sold in Canada come under the heading of "export sales" and royalties on such sales are usually fixed at half the American scale, on account of the increased cost of distribution in the Canadian market.

Most publishers have a semiannual accounting, and royalties due to the author are paid once every six months.

It is customary for an interval to elapse between delivery of the statements and the settlement with the author. This interval is variously one, two, or three months, according to the routine of the publisher in question. This is necessary because of the long credit which the publisher is obliged to allow the retail trade.

It is the practice of many publishers to make advance payments to the author in anticipation of

royalties on the day of publication; in the case of well-known authors payment is frequently made on delivery of the manuscript, or even on signature of the contract. These payments vary according to the standing of the author, the importance of the book, and the inclination of the publisher.

Two hundred dollars may be taken as an average advance payment to an unknown novelist. Amounts running into many thousands of dollars often represent the advances made by publishers to established authors. Most publishers would more readily pay large advance sums to big authors than small advances to unknown writers, as the latter, though intrinsically of minor importance, is from their point of view the more speculative arrangement.

A word of explanation is necessary about "subscription royalties." These, or, as they are sometimes called, an accrued advance, simply mean the amount earned in royalties by copies of the book sold up to and including day of publication. A substantial number of copies is often sold to the trade before publication, especially in the case of established authors, and this system of paying the accrued royalties is one which is obviously fair to both author and publisher.

The system of advance payments is yet another indication of the keen competition which exists

among publishers. Yet there is, on the part of several publishing firms of repute, a growing disinclination to pay as-yet-unearned royalties in advance. This disapproval of the principle of anticipatory payments is easy to understand, but, so long as authorship is a precarious career, it may be taken for granted that authors will more readily go to those publishers who are prepared to advance ready cash.

What form does a book contract take? Briefly, it should specify what rights are assigned to the publisher, what remuneration the author receives in return, what territory may be covered by the publisher, and among other points, what the author's liabilities are in the event of an action for libel or infringement. It should provide for periodic payment of moneys due to the author.

No contract has ever been drafted that provided adequately for all possible contingencies, but the process of publication follows a normal course in almost every instance. The exceptional cases are so rare as to be negligible. Consequently, long and complicated contracts are neither necessary nor desirable.

Many of the minor technicalities of a contract it would be impracticable to discuss here. There are, however, certain important points which should be appreciated by the author.

First, the question of territory. If an author assigns "the volume rights" to a publisher he is virtually parting with the right to publish in book form throughout the world and in any language. To assign the "volume rights in the English language" includes the British Empire and editions published in English (such as the Tauchnitz Library) on the continent of Europe. But the assignment of the "English-language volume rights in the United States and Canada" leaves the author free to negotiate separately, and with the possibility of added profit, in the British Empire and abroad.

It may seem strange to the uninitiated that Canada, which is part of the British Empire, should be coupled in this way with America. The reason is simple. The Canadian bookseller, generally speaking, prefers the American-made book. Consequently the American publisher is in a better position to supply the Canadian market than the English publisher. He has, moreover, the additional advantage of territorial proximity. Some English publishers, it is true, have good selling organizations in Canada and therefore wish to include Canada in their territory, but it is being recognized more and more in England that American firms are better able to handle the Canadian market. It is quite customary for the

English publisher to contract for rights in the "British Empire except Canada."

Most book contracts provide for publication within a certain period, usually six months from delivery of the manuscript or signing of the contract. While it is true that no publisher of standing is likely to contract for a book and then indefinitely delay its publication, the proviso is not unreasonable. It is conceivably possible (although no one of practical publishing experience is likely to subscribe to its probability) that an unscrupulous house might thus bottle up a book they didn't want in order to prevent a rival firm publishing it. Dealing with reputable publishers, no author need insist on such a clause in his contract, although it is customarily inserted.

The next point is one which is included in most contracts for fiction. Publishers of an author's novel usually stipulate for the first refusal, sometimes on terms specified in advance, of the author's next one, two, or three books. Among authors there exists some misunderstanding of such option clauses. A partial explanation of the desirability of options from the publisher's point of view is to be found elsewhere in this book.

The arrangement may sometimes seem to work unfairly (*e. g.,* when an author is "tied up" on fixed terms and, by scoring a big success with an

early book under the contract, his market value as an author is immediately enhanced). But to take a broad view, it is quite a reasonable provision for the publisher to make. He can develop the author as a literary property, knowing that he will be able to some extent to reap where he has sown. No publisher can be expected to put the full weight of his selling and publicity organization behind an author's name if, through caprice or the tempting bid of a rival publisher, that author is liable to leave him at a moment's notice.

The prospect of publishing the author's next two or three novels is, however, a reasonable assurance to a publisher that his immediate efforts will not be for the benefit of some one else.

How should an option clause be framed? Options on future books can be arranged in three ways—(1) on fixed terms, usually identical with those for the first book under the contract, (2) on terms "to be mutually arranged," (3) on terms which are calculated on the success of the author's previous book. The first has obvious disadvantages from the author's point of view, but is sometimes not unfair (as when the publisher takes an undeniable gamble with the work of an unknown author). The second is an entirely equitable arrangement, but sometimes defeats its own ends.

A rival publisher may step in and bid for the author's next novel—which means that the first publisher, whose efforts may have largely contributed to the author's success, cannot do less than equal, if not surpass, the newcomer's offer. And when authors are put up to auction between publishers an unfair price is likely to result. Superficially the author may appear to benefit by such competition, but inflated prices are just as harmful in the long run to authors as to publishers.

The third method of framing the option clause —*i.e.*, on results—is perhaps the fairest and best.

A situation of some importance arises in the event of a publisher declining the first manuscript delivered under the option clause. If the option extends to two or even three books it would be unfair to the author for the publisher to insist on the submission of the remaining books when written. Why? Because the author would be virtually deprived of a market for the rejected manuscript. For reasons already indicated, no other publisher would be likely to contract for a single book in the knowledge that another publisher had an option on the author's ensuing books.

To obviate this it is customary to provide for the release of the author in the event of the pub-

lisher not exercising his option on the author's work.

The option principle is on the whole very sound. It is, to the author, an assurance of the publisher's interest in his work, and to the publisher a guaranty of the author's loyalty and a possible future opportunity of recouping himself if the author's earlier books show a loss—which is quite often the case.

The libel clause which is included in most forms of contract requires little explanation. It usually binds the author, in the event of a charge of libel (or of plagiarism) to indemnify the publishers for any expense they may thereby incur.

Other clauses which are included in the majority of agreements provide for the presentation to the author of a number of free copies of the work, usually six. The same clause usually entitles the author to purchase copies for his own use, but not, of course, for resale, at the regular trade price.

More important, there is customarily included, in the case of works of fiction, a clause relating to cheap editions. This is provided for after a specified period, usually two years after the publication of the original edition. The majority of publishers do not themselves issue cheap editions of novels, but transfer the rights to one of the big

cheap-edition publishing houses, whose sole business it is. In this event provision is made for equal division of the proceeds between the author and the original publisher, with an assured minimum of five cents as the author's share.

Last, but by no means least, comes the question of the reservation of "outside" rights. Under this heading are film and dramatic rights, foreign rights, first and second serial rights, and minor rights, such as broadcasting. Generally speaking, the author is entitled to benefit solely from all subsidiary rights, and contracts should be carefully examined from this point of view.

The equity of publishers' participation in outside rights is a much-discussed question. It is impossible to be dogmatic on points of this kind, since special conditions often apply. For instance, film rights. The publisher of a first novel may contend, not unreasonably, that unless he had taken the initial risk of publishing the author's work (it is indeed often a considerable risk), the author would never have been able to dispose of the motion-picture rights. Therefore why should the publisher not share to some extent in the proceeds of a film sale? A fair compromise is sometimes arranged to settle this contention; it is agreed that the publisher should receive a percentage of such sale, which he undertakes to

devote exclusively to additional advertising of the book. This plan, in the event of its operation, benefits both publisher and author by the resulting increase in sales and publicity.

Aside from this special case, the fairest general principle is that when a publisher disposes of subsidiary rights—*e.g.*, translation rights in foreign countries—it is only just that he should derive a percentage in consideration of his services. This point is worth mentioning because many publishers have good organizations for disposing of outside rights, and are consequently fully entitled to an agent's commission.

Contracts made with English publishers often differ considerably. The chief points of difference are in the royalty scale (as we have already noted); in the cheap-edition clause (nearly all English publishers issue their own cheap editions); and in minor details of accounting, libel, and copyright.

It is hardly necessary to add that agreements cannot be canceled except by mutual consent. We have already noted that no contract could be devised which would cover all possible contingencies, but it is gratifying to be able to say from practical experience that, where special circumstances arise, the publisher is as a rule only too anxious to adjust any point which would seem to

operate unfairly as far as the author is concerned. In the event of a dispute, the author may have recourse to his agent or the Authors' League, but disputes between authors and publishers on contractual points are rare, and, I am glad to say, becoming increasingly infrequent. The author should realize that his interests (as I have said elsewhere in these pages) are really identical with those of his publisher, and as partners in the same business venture it should be the aim of both parties to work in harmony.

Chapter Eight: Copyright

OF all the subjects of which authors generally are woefully ignorant, copyright is entitled to first place. Very few authors understand even the elementary principles of copyright, and fewer still have any knowledge of the legal aspect of this important subject. It is true that for practical purposes nothing beyond elementary knowledge is either necessary or desirable. The whole question of copyright bristles with legal complications. Many books have been written on the subject, but it is a point which rarely affects the average author in a practical sense.

Copyright, as its name implies, means the right to copy, or to reproduce. To quote one authority, "in its specific application it means the right to multiply copies of those products of the human brain known as literature and art." To these might be added music. To quote further: "Copyright may be defined as the sole and exclusive liberty of multiplying copies of an original work or composition, or in other words, the right of reproducing in a printed form. There is but one copyright in a literary work, and that one copy-

right covers all serial, book, dramatic, cinematographic or other rights of every kind."

The importance of retaining the copyright will therefore be readily seen. It is not necessary to part with the copyright in order to produce a work in book or any other form, as the author has the power to grant a license to publish, and such license can, as we have seen, readily be defined and limited under the terms of the contract.

Copyright is liable to affect an author in two ways. He may commit a breach of copyright himself by infringing some one else's rights; or some one may infringe his rights. The former is in a sense more immediately important. In the event of anyone infringing an author's copyright, his only remedy is a legal one, so that beyond placing the facts of the case in a lawyer's hands, he can do little more than act on legal advice. But it is very important that he should not unwittingly commit any technical offense himself.

I use the word "unwittingly," because it is obvious that the deliberate plagiarist is not likely to be influenced by any word of warning. He is probably aware of the risk he is taking, and is presumably ready to pay the penalty if discovered.

The most important elementary distinction which must be drawn is that there is no copyright in *facts,* but that there is copyright in the method

of their presentation. If a racehorse is a bay gelding standing sixteen hands high, aged five years, winner of certain races, anybody is at perfect liberty to make these statements in print. But it is not permissible to copy word for word the styled description another writer may have indulged in. This would be infringing his copyright.

In the case of fiction or any work of imagination, copyright exists in the *expression* of an idea (though strictly not in the idea itself) as well as in the author's style. But you need not be afraid of unwittingly following in the tracks of another writer who has had the same inspiration, let us say, for the plot of a story. It is extremely unlikely that such duplication will be followed by any legal action, and, even if it were, it must be remembered that the aggrieved party, in order to establish his case, has to *prove* that you took his idea and could have got it from no other source. There have been many astonishing coincidences of this kind, in which there cannot possibly have been any intentional plagiarism. In fiction particularly, when ideas for plots are so often based on happenings in real life, two or more writers following the same line of thought may easily arrive at more or less the same method of presentation.

Quotation from another's work, provided it is not of unreasonable length and that the source is duly acknowledged, is a recognized custom and would rarely be held to constitute a breach of copyright, but it is generally advisable to obtain permission beforehand from the owner of the copyright.

English copyright is governed at present by the Act of 1911, which gives the author (or the owner of the copyright) the power to publish in any way a particular work, by printing in book form or in magazine or newspaper; to convert a non-dramatic work into a dramatic work, and *vice versa;* to make records or rolls or whatever may be necessary to mechanical production of the work: in short, to "publish" the work in any way within the territory indicated in the Copyright Act, or such countries as have a reciprocal arrangement with Great Britain.

The period covered by the English Act is the author's life and fifty years afterwards (with a few exceptions), so it will be seen how very important it is that an author should not give up absolute control of his rights. The protection afforded in this way by the other countries indicated is subject to the copyright laws in force in each particular country, and copyright under the British

Act becomes operative automatically for writers living in the colonies.

The possession of certain rights, in literary property as in anything else, indicates that the possessor has power to defend those rights, and to demand compensation if those rights are infringed. To quote the Act of 1911, "Copyright in a work shall be deemed to be infringed by any person who, without the consent of the owner of the copyright, does anything the sole right to do which is by this Act conferred on the owner of the copyright; Provided"—and there follows a description of exceptions to this rule; such as reviewing, or newspaper summary, inclusion of a certain amount of material in books for schools, lectures, etc.

Since the Act was framed a new method of publication has sprung up—*viz.*, broadcasting—and this is covered by the provision guarding against the reading or recitation in public by one person of any reasonable extract from any published work.

When the copyright in a work has been infringed in any way, the owner of the copyright has certain clearly defined remedies, and it behooves such owner to take steps to protect his rights as soon as possible after learning of any such infringement.

It is impossible to give more than a brief outline of an author's rights under this heading; in fact, it is probably unnecessary. All that the author need bother about in the first place is to look out for any unauthorized use of his works, and if he finds any, to consult some one who can give him sound legal advice as to his position. There are many people qualified to give this advice, such as the secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors.

Of course, this does not mean that an author should not know something about the value of the work which he has created. On the contrary, he would be well advised to become acquainted with the general principles of the Copyright Act, certainly before he ventures far on his literary career. The point is that unless he has a natural aptitude for such things, he would probably be more profitably employed in creative work than struggling to cope with the intricacies of a legal document upon which even experts hold varying views. Since this work is intended for the use of the beginner in literature as well as the experienced writer, it would perhaps be as well to leave this as it stands, for the longer one labors the point to the novice, the more confused he is likely to become.

The protection afforded by the Copyright Act

of 1911 extends to most of the British Dominions and colonies and, as indicated earlier in this chapter, such countries as have a reciprocal agreement with Great Britain. This arrangement covers most of the European countries and certain states in other parts of the world. The most notable exception, perhaps, is the United States of America, which country has its own copyright law.

But for the moment let us keep to the English Act. In the first place, English copyright does not depend upon any formalities for its existence, but comes automatically into being with the creation of a particular work, be it short story, poem, novel, treatise, literary, musical, or artistic work of any description. As far as literary works are concerned, the formalities begin with the publication of the work. Prior to the present Act registration was necessary to protect the copyright of a work, but the 1911 Act has done away with that. What is necessary, however, is that on publication the publisher must send a copy of the best edition to the British Museum, and that the university libraries have the right to demand copies of the ordinary edition, and certain penalties are laid down for non-observance of the requirements. But the obligation is upon the pub-

lisher, so the author should be free of worry in this respect.

A special word of caution may not come amiss here to those authors who write for magazines or periodicals. The Act assigns to the author the copyright of anything that appears in any such publication—apart from such publication—unless a definite agreement is made conceding the copyright to the publisher or proprietor of the periodical. Therefore the author should carefully note what kind of receipt he is asked to sign in return for payment; or he may find that he has unwittingly parted with all his rights in the work. This may seem a little point, but it precludes the author from publishing that particular piece of work anywhere else without the permission of the party to whom he has sold his rights. In the case of a serial story this may very well be a considerable loss to the author, and even short stories sometimes have an unexpected value in future years.

Second serial rights, film and dramatic rights (the former especially), are often potentially valuable. Therefore the author should pay careful attention to actual disposal of his work. For example, when submitting a short story to a magazine he should, in his accompanying letter, specially offer "first British serial rights"—

which is all the reasonable editor or proprietor expects to acquire. Some publications, taking advantage of the average author's complete ignorance on the subject, either offer to buy "all rights" in the story or, worse still, pay for it with a printed indorsement receipt (usually in small type) on the back of the check, which reads something like this, "To copyright and all other author's rights of and in — —" (then the title of the story). Sometimes it pays an author, especially an absolute beginner, to grin and bear it—and sign. No magazine likes quarrelsome contributors, even when they are in the right. But the author should at any rate know what he is doing.

An Order in Council extends the provision of the Copyright Act of 1911 to American authors, as though they were British subjects, and under the same conditions.

The American Copyright Act of 1909 is on a rather different footing. The main feature is that works must be manufactured in the United States and registered at the Library of Congress, Washington. The term of copyright granted is twenty-eight years, which can be renewed for a further period of similar length on the application of the author one year before the expiration of the first term.

English authors can get their books protected on the same terms, provided that publication in the two countries is "simultaneous." In order to allow for a little difficulty in getting the publication dates to synchronize, the American law permits an author to deposit and register a copy of the English edition of a book within sixty days of first publication (it used to be thirty days), thereby securing interim copyright. The protection thus obtained is retrospective to the date of first day of publication, and extends for four months from the date of registration. It is advisable to lodge such a copy for interim copyright as early as possible, as no proceedings, in the event of piracy, can be taken until the book has been registered.

If the book is then set up and printed in America before the expiration of the four months' period, copyright is obtained for twenty-eight years—with the right of extension—and the book is as fully protected as is possible.

It is of interest to note that a new copyright bill is now under consideration in America which will go a long way towards equalizing the positions of American and English authors. But there would be little use in giving it more than passing mention until it has been accepted as

the law of the land, for the bill that goes through without alteration is probably not yet drafted.

Certain features of the American law are worth noting. Publication of a book in serial form in a magazine automatically secures copyright provision applying to periodicals. As only one copyright exists in any work, the author must notify the book publisher of the time and place of the serial so that the book may reaffirm the original copyright.

No book may be copyrighted in manuscript—it must be set up and printed first. Certain exceptions in regard to sermons, addresses, play scripts—works intended for oral delivery—allow these to be filed in manuscript form and copyrighted. It is a matter of opinion whether there is protection under copyright law against the use of book material in broadcasting. To preserve the integrity of the copyright there should be this protection against *any use* and it should be the right of the holder of such copyright to say whether his material may be used in play, picture, phonograph, radio, or any other form and on what terms.

Under a recent law passed by the Canadian government, American books must be set up and printed in Canada in order to secure protection. Serial publication or sale of serial rights secures

protection. But failing this, the Canadian publisher may take any American book or magazine article he desires and pay what he chooses. Agreement on the part of the author to the sum offered is immaterial.

Chapter Nine: Producing and Marketing a Book

IT is now necessary to describe briefly the process of publishing a book. Outside the publishing world itself, complete ignorance seems to prevail as to the procedure of book publication. An elementary explanation will therefore not be out of place, although many who read this book will be thoroughly familiar with publishing processes.

As soon as a book has been accepted the approximate date of publication is decided upon. This decision usually rests with the publisher, although the author's wishes are often consulted. The contract usually provides for a time limit.

The actual publication date is sometimes of considerable importance. When fewer books were produced the spring and the autumn were the recognized publishing seasons, but the disappearance of seasonal publication, although it is still adhered to by some of the older houses, is a sign of the times. The summer months, which used to be a closed season for books, now see the production of many books of the first importance. Especially is this true of novels.

This is common sense as opposed to publishing tradition, for probably as many (if not more) novels are read in the summer months as at any other period of the year. But there is another sound reason for being published in the comparatively slack season. There is less competition. The fewer "latest novels" there are, the more selling opportunity there is for a new novel. There is, too, a minor practical consideration. When printers and binders are not so busy they can give more time and attention to the details of a book's production.

The production of a book begins when the manuscript is sent to the printers to be "set up." Most publishing firms have their regular printers; some, on account of the large number of books they produce, employ several printing firms. Some even have their own printing works.

When the printer receives the manuscript he usually furnishes the publisher with a detailed estimate of the costs of composition, machining, etc., which enables the publisher to check his own estimate. The manuscript goes to the composing room, where, after the size of the page, margins, etc., have been decided, it is divided up among several compositors.

It is important that an author should realize what happens to his manuscript when it gets into

the printer's hands. If a MS. has been bound up it has to be ripped open and divided into sections. It is, as we have noted already, a great convenience to the printer if a manuscript has a removable cover, or if the pages can be readily separated; and it is also desirable that the pages should be numbered consecutively throughout, and not chapter by chapter.

Thus different sections of the book are put into type simultaneously. The lines of type are placed by the compositor into a shallow container called a galley, which holds fifteen inches to twenty inches of type—*i.e.,* the equivalent of three or four printed pages. As the galleys are completed, proofs or "pulls" are taken. These proofs are known as "galley," or slip, proofs. These are first corrected by the printer's readers, who check the proofs strictly by the "copy," or original manuscript.

It is customary for most publishers to send two sets of galley proofs to the author. One set of proofs bears the printer's corrections and queries, and is stamped or labeled with the request that this set should receive the additional corrections of the author and be returned to the publisher as quickly as possible. The other set is for the author to keep for reference.

The corrections of the printer's reader should

be copied by the author on the blank set of proofs, in addition to his own corrections. This will enable him to keep a record of the precise amount of corrections he has made, for it is customary for the publisher to debit author's corrections in excess of a certain amount against the author's account. The errors made by the printers themselves are not, of course, included, but it is just as well, in case of dispute, for the author to preserve a record, which shows which were the printer's and which the author's corrections.

It often happens that the printer's reader has occasion to "query" a point in the text. It may be an obvious slip, a misquotation, a fault of grammar or style, an omission or redundancy—in fact, any point which strikes him as doubtful. His instructions are to check the proofs by the "copy," and if the "copy" is wrong he can only query it, which he does by inserting the letters "Qy." in the margin opposite the doubtful word or passage which he underlines. The author should take particular note of these queries, which are often valuable, since they draw attention to points which the author himself may well have overlooked. Printers' readers are, as a class, very well read and intelligent, and their comments should receive careful attention. Some inexperienced authors are inclined to resent the queries

of the proof-reader, but he is almost invariably right, and anyone who has had any association with readers cannot fail to appreciate the value of their queries. It is seldom that any doubtful point escapes them.

Whichever way a query is decided the author should be careful to mark it through clearly—usually with a tick, thus √—before returning the proofs. If this is not done the compositor is left without instructions when he has to work on the corrected proofs. A constant source of delay and irritation in this connection is to have the author's proofs come back with no indication of how the author wants to decide the point at issue.

Young authors seemingly find it hard to understand that every correction they make after the manuscript has been set up in type *costs money*. Even the deletion of a letter or a word at the end of a paragraph takes up the compositor's time. And apparently simple corrections sometimes involve the resetting of a whole paragraph. To delete, for instance, a few words from a sentence in the middle of a long paragraph may involve the dislocation of every line of type in that paragraph, which means that every line has to be rearranged.

The question of author's corrections is so important that, as we have seen, a clause in the

contract provides that the author should bear the cost of excessive corrections. But, apart from the financial aspect, authors who indulge in too lavish corrections are a positive nuisance to the publisher. Heavy and unnecessary corrections probably spell delay and the publisher's schedule may be upset accordingly. Also, the author in such cases is apt to dispute the sum debited to his account in respect of excessive corrections, and both publisher and printer may be put to a lot of trouble in satisfying the irate author that the charge is correct. Many unfortunate quarrels have arisen in this way, simply because authors are ignorant of the fact that corrections are expensive.

When the author returns his corrected proofs, the corrections are duly carried out in type. The procedure of different publishers naturally varies. Some embody their printer's readers' corrections in type before proofs are submitted to the author. Other publishers do not send galley proofs at all, but wait till a later stage, when page proofs are available.

The type in the galleys is then measured off and separated into page form. The number of the page, the title of the book, and the chapter headings are added, and each page of type is placed in what is known as a form, into which the

type is locked, and once more proofs are taken. Sometimes, but not always, these proofs are submitted to the author. None but absolutely necessary corrections should be made at this stage, as the dislocation of a line or two may now compel the rearrangement of several pages.

Meanwhile, the wrapper, or "jacket," as it is called, is in process of manufacture. The commercial significance of the wrapper is fully realized by most publishers, but the suggested design is often submitted to the author, together with a copy of the descriptive matter which most wrappers contain. Very often the author is invited to supply a paragraph descriptive of his book, which can be used for this purpose. Publishers generally are anxious that the various details of book productions should please the author, and as the wrapper is an important item the author's co-operation is frequently invited.

Illustrations have to be dealt with separately, the half-tones or cuts for these being made independently by the publisher's engraver, and sent to the printer for insertion in the text. The utmost care is necessary in handling illustrations, but the various points which have to be decided—*e.g.*, the size of the different cuts, screen numbers, the system by which the printer is enabled to identify the cuts when they are placed in his

hands—all these matters are almost invariably attended to by a department in the publisher's office, in whose hands the author can safely leave them.

The production of a book is largely a mechanical process. To the printer and engraver a book is so much metal, and measurements are the chief element in the actual manufacture of a book. The author should leave much to the discretion of his publisher, who, in his turn, relies to a considerable extent on the judgment of the printer. There are all kinds of printers, of course, but at its best printing is as much of an art as a science, and fortunate is the author whose work is published by a firm which produces tasteful books.

An author may—very often does—prefer a certain style of binding, or wish for certain points to be observed in his book's production. If he knows exactly what he wants, provided that his requirements are practicable, he should communicate them to the publisher, who, as a rule, is glad to observe the author's wishes. But the author who has only a vague idea of what he wants should not interfere, for he will become unpopular.

The first step in the actual marketing of a book is the advance information supplied to the firm's

travelers of its forthcoming publications. They are supplied with such details as will enable them to secure advance orders from the trade. The booksellers are usually canvassed several weeks before actual publication date, the travelers being supplied with special advance copies of the book and wrapper for the purpose. Very often the publisher will not give his actual printing order until he can tell roughly how many copies the trade will order in anticipation of publication. Copies of a book sold up to and including publication date are known as subscription or advance sales.

Before actual publication date preliminary press advertisements are issued by most publishers and advance copies are sent to the leading papers for review. As the publisher likes to please the author if he can, the author's co-operation is sometimes sought, in a matter of review copies especially, although the ordinary contract stipulates that all such details should be left to the publisher's discretion. And usually he is the better judge, as selling books happens to be his business. Press advertising and reviews are but means to an end from the publisher's point of view. And this brings us to an important point. What *does* sell books? Or, rather, what sells a book for which a demand has to be created?

At first sight the answer would appear to be simple. Most people not intimately connected with bookselling would probably say advertising. On more careful consideration they might add press reviews and the activity of the publisher's salesmen. No one can deny that all of these are contributing factors. But all who are concerned in the publication of books know that the problem is much more profound and mystifying. A publisher may discover what he, his readers, and all who read the manuscript or proofs consider a "winner." It is well produced; the time of publication—always an important point—is carefully chosen; the book is well advertised in advance; the travelers are imbued with enthusiasm; the trade is diligently circularized; and the book is ushered into the world under conditions as favorable as human effort can make them. A generous advertising campaign is launched; the critics praise the book; it is well displayed in the windows of bookshops—but, somehow or other, the reading public won't have it. It doesn't sell. The publisher may accelerate his efforts, spend more money advertising the book—all with negligible results.

On the other hand a book may be published with none of these advantages. It is unheralded in the publisher's advertisements, the reviewers

ignore it, the trade often is unaware of its existence until the public begins to ask for it. The publisher, recording the growing demand with astonished satisfaction, realizes he is entertaining an angel unawares. If he is a good business man he at once begins an energetic sales campaign and promptly invests in advertising; for "invest" is the right word to use. Bewildering? Of course it is. But it is constantly happening.

No one can tell how a book is going to sell. In the case of established authors, whose loyal public may be safely estimated to within a few thousands, there is not, of course, the same uncertainty. A book by an unknown author is, however, always a gamble. The fascination of publishing lies, of course, in this huge element of chance. That is, I think, why so many bad books are published; the publishers will back loser after loser in the hope of one day spotting a real winner.

Books, like plays, are very uncertain quantities until their public appearance. Their success, from a sales point of view, is not, however, to be measured by their quality. Good books don't sell; bad books do, and very often. Public taste is absolutely mystifying. No one can prejudge it. If there were anybody who could accurately forecast the fate of any manuscript he would be liter-

ally worth a fortune to any publisher. How can one individual determine the potential selling quality of a novel, for instance, when there are as many different grades of novels as there are readers? Who can say with absolute confidence what is going to appeal to even one section of the reading public?

It is tremendously difficult to judge the prospects of a story in manuscript. (Books of general or serious interest are obviously easier to assess and publishers rarely make mistakes with non-fiction books.) There is a host of classic "rejections" that afterwards turned out to be "best-sellers."

No one really knows what the public wants. For three years Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* is reported to have gone the rounds. That great money-maker, "Charley's Aunt," was rejected by nearly every manager in London. Rossini told Jenny Lind she would never be a singer; Sullivan didn't think Melba's voice good enough; Tree rejected Barrie's "Peter Pan." Experience fails to teach us what the public wants, and intuition is more often wrong than right.

Every publisher makes mistakes of this kind, but when he lets a book slip through his hands, only to see it prove a big commercial or artistic success in the hands of another publisher, it does

not necessarily follow that there must be wailing and gnashing of teeth in the office. Admittedly, very few like to see their rival in business prosper by their own errors of judgment, but there is something to be said for the point of view of the publisher who recently wrote to me:

> When anyone tells me of a masterpiece which we have rejected, I refuse to shed tears, for I always think that the book trade would be healthier if we publishers repented more for the rubbish that we so constantly publish, rather than for the gems of literature which the best of us occasionally reject.

Apart from the speculative aspect of publishing books, every author should know something of the procedure of publication and of the conditions which govern the selling of books. Although the publisher is in a sense his business partner, the author rarely knows anything about the publisher's job. So many authors regard publishers as a mysterious race whose ways are beyond comprehension, that it is high time some light was usefully shed on the status, functions, and limitations of publishers generally.

It is unnecessary to emphasize the risks attached to publishing (I refer to the publication of books of general interest and fiction, especially the latter). Some publishers have more judg-

ment, or flair, than others, and prosper accordingly; but the element of chance inseparable from trying to satisfy the public taste makes publishing a more than ordinarily hazardous occupation. There is much less risk—and incidentally much more profit—in publishing educational and technical books, but for the purpose of this brief survey we have been considering the "general" publisher.

The price of books is a subject of interest and importance to every author. The published price of a book directly affects both its sales and the author's royalty.

"The published price" (of the ordinary run of new books) says an English publisher,[1] "can be divided into three more or less equal parts, *viz.*:

1. The actual cost of manufacturing—*i.e.*, paper, printing, and binding.
2. The cost of distribution—*i.e.*, booksellers' discounts and travelers' commissions.
3. The balance, which has to cover:
   (*a*) Advertising;
   (*b*) The author's royalty;
   (*c*) The publisher's working expenses;
   (*d*) The publisher's profit."

Roughly speaking, it costs between two and

[1] *Mr. Stanley Unwin.*

three times as much to manufacture a book to-day as it did ten years ago. Printing, paper, and binding costs have all increased considerably. The cost of distribution has also advanced, the minimum discount demanded by the bookseller now averaging thirty-three and one-third per cent. Advertising is more expensive than ever. The author's royalty is calculated on the published price—an important point. To quote the English publisher further, "The publisher's working expenses are extraordinarily high. It is not that publishers' businesses are extravagantly run; most of them, I believe, are fairly economically run; because at best the turnover is small compared with any staple commodity such as tea, *and the detailed work involved is out of all proportion.*" (The italics are mine.)

What are the average sales of a novel? Sales are an unknown quantity to most commencing authors, and some approximate figures may be of interest. For a first novel, a sale of from 3,000 to 5,000 copies will enable the publisher to break even on his plate investment in a two-dollar book. An average successful novel sells from about five to ten thousand copies. The sales of many novels do not exceed 2,000 copies, and a considerable number sell no more than a few hundred copies. The sales of established novelists vary from five

to as many as fifty thousand. Anything over 10,000 copies may be regarded as a substantial success; and over 25,000 as an outstanding success. From fifty thousand onward we are in the region of the "best-seller."

Publishers often incur an actual loss on the two-dollar edition of a novel. On the majority of first novels the publisher loses money.

Chapter Ten: Film, Dramatic, Serial and Other Rights

AUTHORS who have not had first-hand experience of the movie business are usually inclined to believe that it is not only delightfully easy to write or adapt their work for the screen, but that it readily yields enormous sums of money. Mention film rights to the inexperienced author and his eye lights up at once. This optimistic attitude is not justified by the facts.

The film industry is something like an infant prodigy. It grew overnight, almost literally; and its commercial possibilities were so immediately manifest that many speculators and adventurers were attracted to this new field. The "boom" days, when everything, including prices, was experimental, have passed, as they were bound to do; and the new industry is at the present time settling down. Better films are being produced, and one welcomes the entrance into the field of German, Austrian, and Scandinavian producers, and the present welcome revival of the British industry, which has all along struggled against grave disadvantages.

Although there are no huge fortunes ready to

fall into the lap of the author, film rights are (relatively) extremely valuable. But it must be clearly understood that the requirements of producers exclude all but a small proportion of stories. Enthusiastic amateur aspirants will spare themselves a lot of disappointment if they will only recognize the fact that the film specialist alone can judge whether a story is suitable for the screen. Even the established novelist is often incapable of judging which of his novels, if any, is acceptable from the film point of view.

Without attempting to give any comprehensive survey of the requirements of the photoplay market, it is still possible to indicate something of the policy and methods of film companies. In the first place, a distinction must be drawn between the original idea, whether it takes the form of a scenario or synopsis, and the published story which is adaptable for film purposes.

At once it must be stated that producers buy very little "outside" stuff. Once in a while a film company will invite the submission of original ideas, with the almost invariable stipulation that they take the form of synopses. Outside the trade only a very few people have any appreciation of even the elementary requirements of film technique, and every company has its own staff of scenario writers and editors. Scenario writing is

emphatically the province of the professional. Producers don't want original scenarios from unknown writers. In the case of a well-known author whose work reveals pronounced film qualities, it often happens that he finds himself commissioned by a company to write stories for production, but it is useless under present conditions for the amateur to approach firms or producers with original scripts.

The practice also has its dangers. Although no reputable firm would steal an idea from an outside contributor, there are still a number of quite unscrupulous people in the film business who would not hesitate—reluctant as one is to state the fact—to make use of unsolicited ideas without acknowledging their source. Copyright exists in the writer's work, it is true, but it is an exceedingly difficult thing to establish one's claim in the event of a plot or a situation being "lifted" in this way. With a published story it is a very different matter.

The majority of stories which are filmed are published in either book or serial form beforehand. Producers much prefer to consider a published novel, or short story. In fact, many of them will not look at manuscripts at all.

Some firms, it is true, prefer to consider a published story in synopsis form. This is only a pre-

liminary step, as, if they are interested, they will certainly want to read the complete story subsequently; but it saves a good deal of time, as it is nearly always possible to judge from the synopsis whether a story has screen possibilities or not. The synopsis of an ordinary novel should consist of about 500 to 1,000 words, not longer, and should cover the action of the story, stressing its dramatic scenes, if possible. For film purposes a story is usually divided up into five "reels," and if the story lends itself to summary in five sections, with a good dramatic crisis in each, it is not a bad plan to draft the synopsis in this way. One advantage from the author's point of view in approaching firms with a synopsis in the first instance is that it is less expensive to send around a two-page synopsis than a copy of the book, and if there is any delay or difficulty in recovering it he does not stand to lose the book. It is advisable to keep a copy of a synopsis, as one or two of the film companies are inclined to be careless with unsolicited material. In the case of a short story, a synopsis is of course quite unnecessary; the published story should be submitted.

A full-length film is often made from a magazine story. Indeed, in many ways the short story lends itself better to film adaptation than the novel. Occasionally a short story is purchased

with the intention of making a two-reeler out of it, in which case the price paid is considerably less than for a full-length film.

From the printed story, whether it be novel or short story, the producer can judge whether it has film possibilities, and on this basis they make their offer for the film rights. They then turn the story over to their own experts for conversion into a film. Incidentally, one may remark that as a result of their labors the bewildered author is frequently unable to trace more than a faint resemblance to the original. Indeed, the story goes that a well-known American writer, invited to witness the trade show of the film version of one of his novels, was unable to identify more than the name of one of his minor characters. Watching the film, he had an inspiration for another story suggested by one of the situations, sat down and wrote it, and eventually submitted it to the very same film company, who promptly bought the rights.

The demand for new stories for the films is widespread, and, if anything, is increasing. Producers are always on the lookout for good filmable stories, and spend considerable time and money in reading the material submitted to them. The individual requirements of the various companies are, in a sense, less ascertainable than the

needs, say, of a fiction magazine, of which the contents furnish a regular clue to the outside contributor. Those who study the productions of different companies will obtain an idea of what kind of story is required by each; but perhaps the best indication is the personalities of the "stars" who are regularly featured in the same company's films, as the present tendency is undoubtedly to decide in favor of the story which will provide suitable parts for their own leading actors and actresses. Certain stories, for instance, would fall into the category of "Betty Balfour" stories, and would be quite inappropriate for a different type of screen actress.

Many good stories are quite unsuitable for filming. There are certain prejudices in the film trade which vary from time to time. With one or two notable exceptions there is, for instance, at the present time a bias against costume pictures, and an objection to stories which involve the "doubling" of two parts by the same actor. Apart from such temporary disadvantages, many stories, which at first sight may appear eminently filmable, will be found to make no appeal to producers.

The producer always has his eye on the public. And the film public is something very hard to define. Millions of people go to the pictures, and

their numbers include many widely differing types. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, their taste is as varied as their outlook on life. In this respect the present-day motion-picture house differs from the theater. Certain theaters have the reputation for a particular type of play, and different grades of theaters exist in order to cater for different tastes. The Theater Guild audience is something entirely different from the Shubert or Erlanger. A development of the future may well be a similar distinction between one cinema and another. Meanwhile, the producer has to cater for a very catholic public, and not every writer can solve the problem for him.

The mechanical side of the business imposes many restrictions on the producer's decision, and objections arising in this respect may not be at all evident to the author. Producing is expensive, and pictures which require an enormous cast, vast spectacles, trick photography, "stunts," double exposures, and so on, may be rejected on the score of impracticability or expense. Many stories cannot be picturized without overloading the film with explanatory captions. All these technicalities are often a closed book to the author.

The trade papers provide much useful information and should be carefully studied by the writer

who has one eye on film rights when writing his novel or story. The activities of the various companies can be noted; trade reviews of films provide valuable indication of the type of story produced by each; articles will shed light on technical requirements; the personalities of different "stars" can be usefully studied.

But, generally speaking, the field is too wide and out of reach for the average author to be able to make a comprehensive study of its requirements. His best policy is to place his work in the hands of a competent agent who is in close touch with the market. The leading literary agencies have a film department in both New York and London and are better able to dispose of film rights than the author himself.

What are film rights worth? The answer to this question depends on other considerations. First, although not by any means most important, the story itself; the company which wants to buy the rights (perhaps the most important consideration of all); the standing of the author and the publicity value of the author's name or of the story itself; sometimes the cost of production. In England good stories are bought by British firms for £100, or even £50, but this is the minimum figure. The average price for an ordinary "five-reeler" where the author is not very well

known is about £200. Two thousand dollars is an ordinary figure. Fifty thousand dollars is by no means a top price. As much as £5,000 was paid recently by an English company, but that is an uncommonly big figure for an English firm to pay. Thus under present conditions the home market is the best field for the American novelist.

The film rights are leased for a number of years to the producing company, at the expiration of which period they revert to the owner of the copyright, usually the author. Royalties are sometimes paid, but only to prominent authors, and then very rarely. In any case, the royalty basis, at any rate under present conditions, works out very unsatisfactorily in practice, although it sounds better theoretically.

The market for film rights is very well worth cultivation, but it is difficult to cultivate. I doubt whether anything but some years of practical experience will enable the author to understand and appreciate the requirements as well as the limitations of the business. However, it is so profitable a field that an author is justified in attempting closer acquaintanceship with its technicalities. I know several authors whose work has been a big success in films, but whose stories have failed surprisingly in book form—another indication of the essential difference between films and fiction. This

note of warning has to be sounded, if only to counteract the general impression among authors that their work is capable of being successfully filmed. The point is that the author usually can't tell; and failing first hand knowledge of the business, he should leave the decision to others more expert. In any case, business arrangements, in the fortunate event of his work satisfying the demands of producers, should be intrusted to a good agent.

. . . . . .

Somebody once said that at some time or other in his life every man has the ambition to write a play. "And nearly all of them write it," said a cynic to me recently. Perhaps he was justified in his bitterness, for he had spent several weeks in wading through an incredibly large number of entries for a play competition, only to find that the percentage of plays which were *worth consideration* worked out at less than one per cent.

Writing a play has an attraction which is easy to understand. It looks easy; from the actual writing point of view much less formidable than a novel. To be a dramatist seems to be on a higher plane, somehow, than to be a mere novelist. The sensation of power which the aspiring dramatist anticipates probably captures his imagination; it must be wonderful (he thinks) to set in motion

the intricate mechanism of the theater, to put his own words into the mouths of distinguished actors and actresses. The glamour surrounding the theater still exists for those who are innocent of its ways. And, finally, it is generally believed that a successful play will make the fortune of the author.

It is a delightful prospect. As a result of this general conception of the rôle of the dramatist, and in all ignorance of the heart-breaking disappointments and complete disillusionment which await ninety-nine out of every hundred budding playwrights, men and women of all ages and temperaments, and in every conceivable situation in life, cheerfully set about writing a play, in the optimistic expectation that it has only to be brought before a manager with sufficient insight and artistic appreciation to make their fame and fortune overnight.

Alas, poor Yorick! The art of the playwright is a gift rarely bestowed. It is infinitely more difficult to write a good play than to write a good novel or even a good short story. It is equally difficult to write a commercial play. It is also difficult to judge a play. Negatively, one can say that a play fails for certain reasons, but the flair for detecting a potentially successful play is almost as rare as the ability to write one.

From time to time we hear managerial laments of the scarcity of good plays and of new playwrights of promise. And here we are confronted with a curious paradox. On the one hand, managers openly appeal for new plays of merit, and on the other we have an almost cynical discouragement of new talent. Probably because they are so disheartened by the quantity of appallingly poor efforts which come to their desks, managers view a new play by an unknown writer with indifference and an air of gloomy resignation, which is fatal to the chances of any play not of outstanding merit.

Theatrical production is a gamble on a very expensive scale. The production of a play may cost anywhere from $25,000 to $100,000, and few managers can afford to experiment. This directly militates against the unknown author. Producers who thus play for safety by producing the mediocre work of established playwrights, in preference to experimenting with the effort of an unknown author, are not always to be blamed for their attitude. Few plays make any money; it is estimated that only about fifteen per cent show any substantial profit. As soon as a new play, courageously produced by one of the repertory companies—to which I shall refer later—shows signs of being a success, managers fall head over

heels in their anxiety to acquire the production rights.

Many a really good play has doubtless lost all chance of production, partly through the genuine difficulty in discerning dramatic merit, and also through the indifference of managers, which, in its turn, is due to the avalanche of wofully poor material with which other beginners steadily bombard them. Perhaps it is going too far to suggest that managers have given up all hope of discovering new talent, but, compared at any rate with journalism and publishing, there is a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm. Some managers even refuse to read unsolicited manuscripts.

In spite of these discouraging conditions, and even admitting that writing a good play is a very difficult achievement, the "urge" is so strong that people will still go on writing plays; and although it does not fall within the scope of this book to attempt any instruction in the art of playwriting (though, to quote Mr. William Archer, "There are no rules for writing plays") something must be said about the requirements of a successful play and the conditions under which plays are accepted and produced.

Without inborn dramatic instinct no one can hope to write a good play. (Unfortunately, it is hopeless to try and convince *anyone* who writes

a play that he or she may *not* possess this essential qualification.) It is true that most of us have some fundamental dramatic instinct, and there is no doubt that it can be fostered and developed by constant playgoing.

It is also true that no one can hope to write a successful play without some knowledge or appreciation of the mechanical limitations of stage production. Too many characters will deprive a play of any commercial chance it may possess. A big cast is expensive, as is elaborate scenery, and neither is likely to appeal to a manager. By constantly going to see plays performed, the would-be playwright can learn a great deal.

Of all technical points which may thus be noted, perhaps the most valuable is the study of exits and entrances. By observing how the practiced dramatist brings his characters on and takes them off the stage, much amateurishness may be avoided. The relative effectiveness of "curtains" may be also studied, and many other important points of craftsmanship.

There are four ways of submitting a play: (1) to a manager direct; (2) to a leading actor or actress in the hope that a part in the play may appeal to him or her so strongly that he or she will bring pressure to bear on a manager in order to play the part; (3) to send it to a play-produc-

ing society or repertory company; (4) to employ an agent.

The first method has been touched upon already. The second is not a bad plan, if the playwright is acquainted with actors and actresses of sufficient standing; many plays have been accepted in this way. The third method brings us to the repertory company, about which a word must be said.

The development of the play-producing society is a welcome sign. These are societies formed with the idea of encouraging and fostering new dramatic talent. They will often undertake the production of plays unlikely to appeal to a commercial management, but it is significant that their presentations are watched with keen interest by Broadway managers. In fact, many of the biggest successes of recent years were first produced by one or other of the repertory companies.

Before going on to deal with the fourth way of submitting a play—*viz.*, through an agent—let us examine briefly the conditions under which plays are usually accepted. The customary arrangement is on a royalty basis, with an advance payment in anticipation of royalties, the royalty consisting of a percentage of box-office receipts. The actual percentage varies with the standing of the author.

A clause of considerable importance to the author, which on that account should never be omitted from any dramatic contract, provides for the production of the play within a certain time, usually twelve months from the date of the contract. If the manager fails to produce the play within the specified time the rights revert to the author. This prevents an unscrupulous manager from bottling up a play which he himself has no intention of producing, but which he is anxious to keep out of the hands of his rivals.

It is also customary for the producer to undertake to present the play for a certain period each year following the first performance, and in the event of his failing to do so the rights revert to the author.

Plays should never be sold outright. In one of his novels, Leonard Merrick, who writes with a real knowledge of the stage of that period, describes the enormous commercial success of a play which the young author was induced to sell for the handsome outright payment of ten pounds. Things are not so bad as that to-day, but there are still many unscrupulous people in the lower grades of the theatrical profession who would not hesitate to take advantage of an author's ignorance.

The dramatization of a novel or short story

by another party calls for a contract between author and adapter. This form of dramatization is often the most successful, as it is not an uncommon thing for a novelist to be quite incapable of producing an effective dramatic version of his work, however good his novels may be as novels. Such collaborations are usually on a fifty-fifty basis, though sometimes it is fifty-five per cent to one and forty-five per cent to the other, depending, of course, on the standing of both parties.

Fully eighty per cent of the plays produced are handled by dramatic agents. It is obvious, therefore, that the beginner should submit his efforts to a good agent in preference to sending them direct to managers. The agents, even more so than on the book side, are acquainted with the requirements and movements of managers and are much more favorably placed in every way. But the agent must be good. The acid test of an agent's standing is the number of plays and dramatists for whom he is responsible. It must not be assumed, however, that the agent will be willing to handle any play submitted to him. Far from it. Only about ten per cent of the plays sent to him are retained for negotiation. But the beginner should certainly try to get an agent to represent him. If the agent isn't impressed, by all means let him submit the script himself to managers.

Even agents are fallible and sometimes entertain angels unawares.

There are a number of good play agents, and the bigger literary agencies usually have an active dramatic department. If the aspiring playwright can get a good agent to represent his interests, this is undoubtedly the most promising method of trying to place his work.

. . . . . .

We now come to serialization, not by any means the least important of the author's outside rights. Serial rights in a non-fiction work obviously depend for their importance on the nature of the book. Some books are quite incapable of serialization. At first sight it would appear that books of technical interest come into this category, but there is always a market for at least a portion of the material in one of the specialist or trade papers. The serial rights of memoirs or reminiscences are often very valuable, and big prices have been paid by newspapers for these rights. Any book which has a "news value" will similarly appeal to an editor.

It is difficult to decide whether previous publication in a newspaper or magazine has an injurious effect on the sales of the book. It may be contended that such publication, if not actually of the whole of the material, at any rate of the most

interesting portions, which is naturally what an editor would select for publication, prevents readers from buying the book when it is published. The balance of opinion seems to be in favor of the theory that the damage, if any, is negligible. The newspaper public is probably a different public altogether from the book public. The majority of publishers take this view, and it is a rare thing for the publisher to object to previous serialization of a book. Some publishers welcome it, believing that any book readers who may be lost as a result of reading the serial installments are more than accounted for by reason of the preliminary publicity which the book has received. Once more, it all depends on the book. Serialization cuts both ways; in the case of a disappointing book, serialization probably does harm, but in the case of a good book, the discussion caused by publication of installments probably serves to stimulate the general interest, which can only have a favorable effect on the book's sales.

Whatever view may be taken regarding the wisdom of serialization, the fact remains that serial rights are of considerable direct value to the author. Authors who are not influenced by financial considerations—and many of the distinguished people who write their memoirs are not—can decide for themselves whether or no

they prefer preliminary publication in newspaper or magazine. I know one very eminent author who regards it as being undignified. But to the vast majority of writers, serial rights are a welcome source of revenue.

It is not easy to give any estimates of the value of serial rights, since the value naturally varies in accordance with the importance of the book. It sometimes happens that current events invest a book with the importance of topicality, and it follows that the value of the serial rights is immediately enhanced. Market prices also fluctuate; the reminiscences which will fetch $5,000 to-day, may to-morrow be worth less or more—it is impossible to say. The general tendency is in the direction of increased prices, competition being keener than ever.

British serial rights are less valuable than American. The huge circulations enjoyed by many of our leading magazines enable them to pay rates with which no British magazine could compete. In England £1,000 is almost the top price paid for the first British serial rights of a novel, whereas the sum of $50,000 has more than once been paid for the American serial rights of a book by an author well "in the public eye."

This market is one that every writer should cultivate and study. Indeed, I imagine that serial

rights, and the possibilities which they open up, figure prominently in the dreams of most writers of fiction both here and across the Atlantic. It is important, therefore, that authors should appreciate the essential individuality of the type of serial story that magazine editors want. The difference between American and British serial requirements is as real as the difference between the American and British weather, and no one who has not experienced both can judge just what that difference is.

Serial rights of non-fiction books are just as valuable as in the case of novels. The American reading public has—perhaps more than any other reading public in the world—a keen interest in everything new, everything vital, that happens along in the world in which they live. The personalities of foreign statesmen and public figures interest us far more than they interest the average man and woman in France or Great Britain. This opens up a wide field for the serialization of non-fiction books. The magazines and newspapers, too, usually have more space at their disposal for features of this nature than have the majority of papers and periodicals in other countries. They can, therefore, run the serialized version of a travel book, or a book with a topical interest, to a greater length—and therefore pay more—than

will be possible, say, in England. An author who has sold the serial rights of his books in both countries for several years told me recently that in every instance the American magazine concerned published the whole 70,000 or 80,000 words of the book in question, whereas in England he had never been able to induce an editor to print more than 30,000 selected from that length.

Second serial rights are the use of material after publication, whether in book or previous serial form. A newspaper or magazine will often purchase the right to publish serially a book or portions of a book which has already appeared, but the prices paid for material bought in this way are naturally much lower, roughly about one-third of first serial rates. The fact that a serial has already appeared in another paper or magazine will not necessarily prevent an editor from buying second serial rights. If, in its previous serial form, it was unlikely to have reached the particular public for which his own paper caters, and yet is the kind of story that will interest his readers, he will usually be glad to consider second rights.

. . . . . .

Syndication is a market that is rapidly growing in importance from the point of view of the writer of non-fiction books. Here it has been developed

to a high pitch of perfection, so that over seventy-five per cent of the non-fiction books serialized are syndicated—often to as many as fifty or sixty papers. Even in England, where easy communications and the compact nature of the principal cities are drawbacks to syndication, this method of marketing the serial rights of an author's work is growing. This was demonstrated when a series of articles by H. G. Wells was not only published in a London daily newspaper, but simultaneously in newspapers published in Liverpool, Glasgow, and elsewhere. Even this wide measure of publicity did not exhaust their value, for the series was afterward reissued for a second time.

It will be obvious that only the book which deals with exclusive information of great importance to the public or which bears a famous name can hope to find success by syndication. An article by Charles Evans Hughes will readily sell all over the world, and could easily be syndicated for simultaneous publication in sixty papers in the United States and at least six or eight in England. In the same way an exclusive interview with a famous statesman on some important point of public policy, secured by a journalist, would readily be accepted by one of the agencies for syndication. For the unknown author, on the other hand, there is not yet a large market in

syndicating, and he would be better advised to direct his energies towards making his name in other ways more profitable for the time being and leave syndication to be considered as a profit-raising scheme later on, when he has a name to offer the public as well as something they want to read.

The profits made by syndication naturally vary with each individual book. The usual arrangement is to charge a varying scale of fees according to the importance of the area covered by each newspaper—a New York journal paying considerably more, of course, than a Milwaukee paper. The same rule applies to England, except that the rate paid for a syndicated article by provincial newspapers there is much lower than the rate that could easily be secured for the same matter here.

. . . . . .

Foreign rights are not usually of much intrinsic value to the author, and the continental markets fluctuate from time to time, in both point of number and value. Nevertheless, there is a good demand for certain types of English and American novels abroad. Not every type of novel is capable of being translated into a foreign language. At the present time the most active markets for English-language books are Germany, Scandinavia, and Holland. French-

language rights cover France and Belgium and French Switzerland. Scandinavian rights are grouped linguistically as follows: (1) Danish and Norwegian; (2) Swedish. Very few English books are bought in either Italy or Spain; France is not much better; and Russia rarely buys any rights. The Anglo-Saxon nations are developing an increasing interest in each other's literature, while the Latin nations are buying fewer and fewer translated books, although internal production in these countries is maintained at a high average. The prices paid for foreign rights may seem surprisingly small, but the heavy cost of making a translation must not be forgotten. About $75 is an averagely good price for the foreign rights of an English novel; $250 is a very good price. Except in the case of a book or novel of international and outstanding importance, anything beyond an outright sale cannot be hoped for under present conditions. It has been until very recently almost impossible to obtain a royalty arrangement for an ordinary book. An interesting exception in recent years was the series of "Tarzan" novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs, which was published in Germany on a royalty basis and proved a gigantic success. In six months the sales of the first three volumes exceeded 200,000 copies. But this is exceptional.

Chapter Eleven: The Author and Publicity

BOOKS, like any other commodity, are subject to the familiar law of supply and demand. Public demand for a book is created in a variety of ways, some of which differ from ordinary commercial processes on account of the peculiar relationship of the author and his work. Having written his book, should the author confine his subsequent interest in its progress to the semi-annual collection of royalties, leaving the problem of salesmanship entirely to the publisher?

The majority of authors, let it be said at once, are willing to help the publisher in selling their books in any way compatible with their personal and professional dignity. That is to say, they are willing to have paragraphs printed about themselves and photographs published, provided that by such means their sales will be increased. Not many will personally inquire for their books at bookstores and libraries, although I know several authors who put their shoulders to the wheel in this way. It is also true that many authors welcome publicity for its own sake. Such vanity is

harmless enough; whether an excess of publicity promotes actual sales is open to question.

In fact, it is difficult, almost impossible, to gauge the value of publicity in its direct relation to sales. But it is a problem from which the author cannot separate himself, for he is permanently associated with the books that bear his name. The man who actually makes soap, or cigarettes, or furniture, is of no interest personally to the public that buys the article; but the author is, undoubtedly, and the public that reads his books is naturally interested (perhaps only to a mild extent, it is true) in the personality of the author. The author has his "public" and they are reasonably and properly curious about himself and his personal activities. How far this interest or curiosity should be satisfied depends on the personal predilections of the author concerned, and the potential selling force created by publicity in relation to the author.

The theory that publicity sells books, or helps to sell books, is, indeed, open to question. There are authors who don't believe in publicity and of whom the public is allowed to know nothing; such is Ethel M. Dell, perhaps the most widely read writer of our time, whose photograph has never, to my knowledge, been published. Nor does Miss Dell rely upon reviews of her books. Her public,

like Topsy, has just "grow'd." On the other hand, many well-known authors attribute their success largely to the publicity they and their books have attained. There is a good deal to be said for both sides. Perhaps it would be near the truth to say that Miss Dell is not the type of author to benefit from widespread publicity; her public, if one may say so, is not to be influenced by newspaper comment, nor would she be likely to increase the number of her readers by taking a more active part in social or literary life. It has also been suggested that her complete retirement from publicity has caused a certain mystery to attach itself to her personality, with the result that people read her books more eagerly and in greater number than ever before. But Miss Dell is probably an exception.

The truth, I expect, lies somewhere between the two extremes. A judicious amount of publicity probably exerts influence on an author's sales. The most valuable kind of publicity is that which reaches an author's potential public.

Publicity, in any case, and whatever form it may take, should not be regarded as anything but a literary trimming. It is, I am convinced, not nearly so important as its enthusiastic devotees would have us believe. The Great Reading Public may be amused or mildly interested in the per-

sonality of the author or in news of his present and future work, but it would be claiming too much to assert that publicity in itself was responsible for attracting readers to an author's work. The appeal of books is more fundamental than that, as we have seen in an earlier chapter. But it serves an undeniably useful purpose in keeping the name of the author in front of the reader, or in reminding him of his intention to read a particular book by that author, or in suggesting the title of a book to add to his lending library list. Thus and thus only are literary reputations built up—or destroyed.

For publicity is a two-edged weapon and it sometimes cuts both ways. The name of Driver Quill may occur so frequently in print that the reader, out of curiosity, may decide and eventually bring himself to read one of Driver Quill's novels; but if he doesn't like that novel, no amount of subsequent publicity will induce him to probe further into Mr. Quill's work. But the important point is that he has been induced to sample it—and then it depends on the book. In fact, it almost always does depend on the book. Without underestimating the value of publicity in all its forms, one cannot too often be reminded of that fundamental truth.

A more practical consideration for the young

writer is the extent to which he can make use of the weapon of publicity, whatever its value in the literary armory. The average young author's attitude towards publicity is, "It's worth trying; it may help me, and if it doesn't there's no harm done." An important point to remember is that publicity is not to be had for the asking. In securing, or endeavoring to secure publicity the measure of the public's interest has to be taken into consideration. Most new authors are nonentities as far as the public is concerned and I am convinced it is merely wasted effort for an author who has still to win his literary spurs to be paragraphed and pictured. Until the public expresses a definite interest in an author's work he should refrain from the practice of supplying paragraphs directly or indirectly to the Press. As a matter of fact, the Press usually supplies the necessary corrective, as the foundation of all editorial publicity is "news interest." Nevertheless, some authors suffer from such a confusion of thought in this connection that they imagine it is urgently desirable to get something into print about themselves. If the circumstances are exceptional the practice is, of course, justifiable.

If, for instance, an author has had an adventurous career before turning his hand to writing or if he has previously earned distinction in

another sphere, it may be worth while supplying some personal data to the publicity department of his publishers. Which brings us to an important point.

The author should not, as a rule, directly approach the Press. It is a mistake to cultivate the acquaintance of or to seek to influence journalists or reviewers. It is another matter altogether if the author is approached by journalists asking for information, but that is not likely to happen to him until he has quite definitely "arrived." Nothing prejudices any conscientious newspaper man so much as an author soliciting publicity. The critic who values his reputation is very properly biased against any personal attempt on the part of the author to ingratiate himself. Yet almost every day one hears of authors who, by personal interview, letters, introductions, and other means seek to secure publicity. One young novelist I know of, presuming upon his slight personal acquaintance—although, naturally enough, the busy news editor in question hadn't the least recollection of ever having met the over-enterprising author—wrote letter after letter to a prominent newspaper, hinting, hoping, suggesting, pleading for a review of his first novel. Such mistaken tactics—as well as the doubtful good taste of the epistolary bombardment—only exasperated the

editor. As it happened, the book was feeble and no review of it has ever appeared in that newspaper.

The proper, and in fact the only legitimate, channel is the publishers' publicity department. Most progressive publishers attach great importance to this branch of book salesmanship. As a general rule the author is approached by the publicity manager, who diplomatically requests the provision of such personal material as will assist the firm in selling the author's books. It is customary in the case of inexperienced authors for him to indicate the type of material suitable, for it is surprising how rarely authors appreciate the difference between what is fit for publication and what is not. Quite intelligent authors often have a hazy idea that the public want to know how many white mice they keep, or that they have made a pet of a toad or a mule, or that they invariably wear green underclothing. The revelation of such personal eccentricities does occasionally occur in print, but only in the slushiest of gossip columns, and usually about inferior actors and actresses.

On the other hand, the reading public is genuinely interested in authentic, informative statements about the private activities of their favorite authors. If a novel, say, sells 3,000 copies or so,

it follows that at least twice that number of people have read the story, and of this number certainly the majority would be interested to read a personal item about the author.

Any information of this kind must, however, have a definite news value, or its chances of appearing in print are remote. Space is too valuable and readers too alert nowadays for editors to print anything which doesn't definitely contribute to the interest of their papers. And as it naturally follows that authors are not themselves the best judges of what will and what will not interest the public, it is usually the best plan for material to be supplied to the publishers and for them to use their discretion in selecting and arranging such material for distribution to appropriate journalistic channels. Thus the author can to an extent be guided by his own feeling in this rather delicate matter. He should supply nothing which he wouldn't care to have appear in print. The publishers can sift the material and distribute only what is of legitimate interest and news value and circularize the Press without loss of dignity.

It is a recognized journalistic practice for publishers to supply "puffs" about books and authors to the newspapers, and although pressure on newspaper space and in some quarters a disinclination

to give gratuitous publicity have in recent years limited the operation of publishers in this direction, they still enjoy the privilege. Not unnaturally, some newspapers are more inclined to give editorial publicity to those firms who advertise in their columns, but it does not necessarily follow that news of books and authors will be excluded because the firm that publishes them is not one of the paper's regular advertisers, any more than it follows that special editorial prominence is given to regular advertisers. Editorial publicity, as distinct from reviews, depends on two things: first, whether the paper in question opens its columns to book news, and secondly and equally important, whether the book news sent by the publisher is of sufficient interest to justify the paper printing it.

Reviews are quite another matter. It is the custom of most newspapers and periodicals to print reviews of new books of importance subject to the amount of space available. No reputable journal is influenced in the slightest by advertising considerations. Advertisement revenue is very welcome, but it is (I am glad to say from practical experience) very rarely permitted to interfere with editorial policy. As a matter of fact, on most great newspapers the editorial and advertis-

ing departments work quite independently of each other.

And now we come to one of the most important phases of the author's career. Reviews or press criticisms of his work may be regarded as of varying importance. Some authors profess to be indifferent to press criticism; others are keenly sensitive to the expressed opinions of experts and others, and relish praise and appreciation as keenly as they dread disapproval and indifference. I do not think I am far wrong if I suggest that however indifferent to criticism some authors may pretend to be, nearly everybody who writes for publication attaches great importance to reviews of his work.

The publisher is responsible for sending review copies to the Press, and the number of copies sent, and to which papers, is as a rule best left to his discretion. This point is usually covered by a contract clause. The author cannot too often be reminded that the publisher's interest and his own are identical and that the publisher has as much reason, if not more, for wishing to exploit every means in his power to sell the book as the author. Parenthetically, one has to admit that not every publisher is as fully alive to the science of selling books as he might be, and provided that the author is qualified to do so, there is no reason why

he should not contribute to the desired end by diplomatic suggestions to the publisher.

In the matter of reviews it does indeed often happen that the author can profitably co-operate with the publisher, and most publishers are inclined to welcome suggestions from authors in regard to the distribution of review copies. Frequently the author has a number of personal friends among journalists who review books or may be instrumental in getting books reviewed, and it would be quixotic if the author declined to take advantage of the opportunity. At the same time, the author should be sure of his ground before suggesting to his publisher that special copies should be sent to the people he knows; by presuming on slight acquaintance the author may be doing himself more harm than good.

We now come to the vexed question of the relationship of reviews and sales. Do reviews sell books? It is very difficult to say. In practice, one so often encounters books that have glowing press notices and negligible sales, and, on the other hand, books that receive only slight attention in the Press—and generally indifferent or sarcastic in tone at that—whose sales are comparatively enormous, that at first sight it certainly does look as if there were no connection whatever between the two.

The explanation is probably that the reviewers do not represent public taste, and that people who read press criticisms and are influenced by them represent a higher grade of literary taste than the average. Probably only a small proportion of the reading public is interested in reviews. At any rate, it is fairly certain that an author like Ethel M. Dell is independent of press criticism; reviews of her novels merely serve the purpose of indicating to her loyal and enthusiastic public that she has written a new book, and for them that is enough. In just the same way, really "popular" plays do not depend to any but a slight extent on the opinions of dramatic critics. Lyceum melodrama appeals to a public that does not read dramatic criticisms.

On the other hand and for the same reason, many authors who invariably receive eulogistic reviews cannot boast even respectable sales. It is sometimes hard to convince an author that good reviews don't necessarily mean good sales. To publishers this is no phenomenon; but the poor author who plaintively cannot understand that while his book has attracted such favorable notice, it yet hasn't apparently sold, is sometimes unjustifiably suspicious of the publisher.

This frequently occurs in the case of books of general interest as well as fiction. There is one

type of book which usually attracts widespread newspaper attention out of all proportion to its ultimate sales. This is the book which contains a large number of good stories. News editors are always on the lookout for books of this kind and "gut" them mercilessly for the news columns, as distinct from the regular book-review columns, on the day of publication. This process is sometimes known as "picking out the plums." A column or so of liberal quotations from the book is grist to the mill of the news editor. It has been contended that this practice is unfair to the author and publisher, on the ground that readers will not trouble to buy or borrow a book if they can have the cream served up to them in the form of a newspaper article. It is certainly true that the sales of such books cannot be estimated in proportion to the attention they receive in the Press. On the other hand, such "reviews" are read by a very large public and are, one may suppose, regarded as an indication of the book's importance. If there is nothing much in the book beyond a number of quotable anecdotes, it is doubtful whether reviews will increase its sales; but if the book is of such merit that quotation serves the purpose of indicating its quality, it usually happens that it sells on a larger scale as a result of the attention it has received. It all depends on the book.

To the publisher, who is as a rule interested in reviews of a book only in so far as they will promote its sales, the question of publicity is less important than it is to the author. Sales are the acid test. Although the publisher naturally likes to see his judgment vindicated by favorable reviews of a book, he is above all a business man, and his attitude toward Press criticism is naturally determined by the effect it has on a book's sales. The experience of most publishers is that good reviews will help a good book enormously (a "good" book in the sense of a saleable book) and that, although good reviews will slightly benefit a "bad" book, they cannot be expected to sell it if it proves to be the kind of book the public will not buy.

As I have already pointed out, publishers are not invariably guided in their choice of books solely by considerations of potential sales. One publisher of my acquaintance said to me recently, "I prefer to publish fiction of quality, what most people call 'highbrow' novels, even if the margin of profit is very small, rather than concentrate on slush; but I must admit I couldn't afford the luxury of pleasing myself if it weren't for So-and-so and So-and-So"—and he named two very popular writers in his list—"who pay my rent and salaries and overhead charges."

The author, however, cannot be expected to view the question of reviews in the same detached way that the publisher does. Naturally, the author likes to feel that appreciative reviews result in more sales, but that is not the only aspect he considers. To him it is of considerable personal importance. The majority of writers are not indifferent to their literary reputation, and reputation, as distinct from income, is undoubtedly created by the critics. But the author should not lose sight of the fact that although a good Press may bring immense personal satisfaction, it by no means follows that the sales of his work will be proportionate.

There are several points of practical detail with which the new author is generally unfamiliar. First the question of press clippings. A subscription of six dollars or less per hundred covers the supply of clippings on any subject or subjects and the rate is usually subject to reduction when a larger number is ordered. As it is frequently difficult, and consequently more expensive, to obtain cuttings from back numbers of papers, it is as well to notify the press clippings agency about a week before the publication of a book, or if advance notices of either the book or the author are expected a few days before the release of such material. In special instances the agencies will

usually undertake to obtain notices that have appeared before the subscription was taken out, but for this it is customary to pay an increased fee, varying with the difficulty experienced in securing them. It is advisable to keep Press cuttings carefully, as after a few months it is often impossible to replace them, as back numbers of periodicals are frequently out of print. Although none of the agencies is infallible, they are surprisingly good in the efficiency of their service, very few notices escaping their attention.

Then there is the question of photographs. It is customary for most of the leading photographers to invite professional men and women like authors to have a complimentary sitting. This is usually profitable to the photographer in two ways: in the first place, if the author likes the resulting photograph he often orders some for his personal use (although he is under no obligation to do so), usually paying for them at a reduced professional rate. If the author doesn't buy any he is usually presented free with one or two finished photographs; and, secondly, the photographer is at liberty to sell to the Press the right of reproduction of the photograph, receiving a fee from the paper that publishes it. Let me state at once that it is very unusual for a paper to pay anything beyond the minimum fee for the

privilege of publishing an author's photograph. In the case of actresses and society women whose beauty renders them eligible for inclusion in the special magazine illustrated supplements a substantial sum is occasionally paid for the exclusive right of reproduction, but authors don't, as a rule, qualify in this direction, and much material of this sort is supplied gratis.

Where the photographer retains the copyright, which he always does if the author doesn't pay for the photograph, he is entitled to sell reproduction rights. The author, however, unless he be so distinguished in his profession that he can afford to disregard the point, should remember that editors are not, as a rule, likely to pay for the privilege of printing his photograph. Editors are well aware that by publishing an author's photograph they are giving him useful publicity—ergo, why pay for it? As a matter of fact, most authors are sensible enough to realize this, and by paying for the photographs that they have taken and thus acquiring the copyright, are in a position to supply prints to any paper that may happen to want them, free of copyright fees, "non-copyright" as they are usually called. Some of the leading photographers also wisely recognize that their prospects of selling photographs of comparatively unknown authors to the Press are re-

mote, and are willing to supply prints free for reproduction on condition that the name of the photographer is acknowledged when the picture is published. They, in their turn, are conscious of the commercial value of publicity.

It is inadvisable to supply mounted cabinet portraits for the purpose of Press reproduction, because in the first place it is more than probable that they will be damaged in their progress through the hands of engravers and others; and, secondly, they are often inconvenient to handle. The most practical plan is to have a number of Press prints made from the negative. The photographer will usually be pleased to supply these for a few cents per print. These are plain reproductions of the negative on either glassy or matt paper. The art editor much prefers Press prints, because he can have them "touched up" as required.

It may seem unnecessary to warn authors that diminutive "snapshots" are not suitable for the purpose of reproduction, but so many presumably intelligent people seem to think that diminutive or blurred photographs are good enough that it is as well to mention that the requirements of a photograph suitable for Press reproduction are, briefly, adequate size—*i.e.*, not less than about five by four inches—clear definition, and appropriate

for the purpose. I mention this last because quite recently the author of a novel which his publishers described as "a notable contribution to a grave social problem" brought along a snapshot of himself thoroughly enjoying life on a Coney Island scenic railway. For the benefit of the absolutely ignorant, I should perhaps add that the size of a published picture isn't necessarily the size of the original print. Usually it is reduced in the process known as photo-engraving. These and other technical details will be made clear to the inquiring author by the publicity manager of his publishers.

I have already referred to the imprudent practice of approaching reviewers. There is one point which deserves the young author's careful attention. It is natural, perhaps, when an unfair or unsympathetic review of his book appears, that the author should want to write to the reviewer, or to the editor of the paper, to protest against such treatment, and to explain that the reviewer has regarded his book in the wrong light, or has overlooked an important point, or even bitterly to suggest that the reviewer hasn't read the book at all. On a question of fact, or misquotation, it is both legitimate and advisable for an author to address a brief letter of correction or explanation to the editor; but in any other case it is emphati-

cally unwise for the author to reply to any criticism of his book. The busy reviewer resents it; if the author's view is wrong and his protest merely the expression of his injured pride, the reviewer naturally resents the waste of time; and if by chance there is something to be said on the author's side, (who knows? That book may have been skipped—even critics are human) the reviewer probably resents it all the more. No one likes to be told that his judgments are either careless or mistaken. In any case the author who replies to reviewers is so liable to irritate them that the practice is undoubtedly one to be avoided. For the sake of his future books let the author swallow his indignation and keep silent.

It is sometimes hard for the author to realize that a "slating" review is just as likely to sell copies of his book as a column of enthusiastic praise. In his indignation he may overlook the fact that it may be what is known as a good "selling" review. Nowadays the new novelist should be grateful if his book gets any appreciable measure of attention. The good old days when a novel could be sure of lengthy and leisured appreciation from all quarters have vanished. To-day the busy reviewer dips into the new novel—and every day brings a lofty pile into his office—and unless it looks promising to the experienced eye

it will probably be dismissed in a few lines, if it gets noticed at all.

It is a worse fate to be neglected altogether or damned with faint praise than to be "slated."

Every author is a law unto himself where publicity is concerned. It is in most cases an important aspect of his work and is commercially valuable, and with that we must leave the subject of editorial publicity.

The advertising of books has been partially dealt with in earlier chapters of this book. This branch of book salesmanship falls within the province of publisher rather than author and is too important a subject to be dismissed by any brief comment, which is all that would be possible in the space at my disposal. It is a matter which, as a rule, may be safely left to the publisher, whose interest in the selling of books should be, and almost invariably is, identical with his author's and, one is glad to say, equally enthusiastic.

Chapter Twelve: The American Market

IF in minor detail some of the statements in this chapter appear to contradict statements in earlier chapters, allowance must be made for the varieties of literary experience. I can bear witness to the soundness and wisdom of what Mr. Joseph has written as a whole; my own contribution may easily err in a fact here and there, in an inference more often.

It will be useful to consider the American market in the successive sales of literary rights. The order is generally as follows:

First American serial rights
Book rights
Second serial rights
Dramatic rights
Reprint rights
Motion-picture rights
Translation rights

The order, except for the first two, is variable. Naturally all these rights are not often realized on a work of fiction, and most of them do not exist at all for the ordinary non-fiction work.

Magazines generally, and at least one fore-

most newspaper syndicate, purchase first American serial rights of fiction (which I will discuss first). Then, if the work be of book length, book publication follows as soon as the magazine schedule makes possible. Then the author, or sometimes the book publisher, sells to a newspaper syndicate the right to cut and divide the work for simultaneous serial publication in newspapers throughout the country—the second serial rights. If the author or some one else sees a play in the novel or story, dramatic rights may be realized. The popularity of a book in the two dollar or two dollar and fifty cent edition may cause it to be reprinted in a year or two as a seventy-five-cent book—the reprint rights materialize. Sale of the motion-picture rights should mean that the story will be filmed and shown throughout the country, though this does not certainly follow. Indeed, authors should understand that the sale of rights is not inevitably and always followed by publication or production of the work. What is sold or made the subject of contract is the *right* to publish or produce, seldom anything more. A magazine is by no means certain to use a story or novel; a book is pretty certain of publication; second serial and reprint rights are not bought unless the work has already achieved success and so are pretty certain to be used. But the

casualties to plays, both stage and screen, are great.

Sales of translation and certain other minor rights are too infrequent to call for discussion. The author should in every case leave their handling to his agent or his publisher.

Let us now consider fiction, which, in point of volume, is easily one-half of all the writing published. So far as concerns first serial rights, in the point of prices paid, fiction is two-thirds of the whole market.

There still exist markets in which two or three cents a word is paid for the first American serial rights of fiction. These are the all-fiction magazines, using newsprint paper, without illustrations and almost devoid of advertising. They make a tiny profit from the sale of each copy; their total sales are often huge. The most ably edited of them, a magazine of long standing with a devoted following, has made its solid success by specializing in stories of men for men and shares thousands of its readers with the *Atlantic Monthly!*

There are several magazines of literary distinction and prestige which pay a better, though still low, rate. The best-paying markets number at least half a dozen and include several of the women's magazines, weeklies of national circulation, the largest of the all-fiction monthlies, one or

two specialized magazines (for certain work) and a leading newspaper syndicate.

What are the prices of first American serial rights in these markets? The best-known magazine in America now takes the position that any story, by anyone, deemed worth its space is worth $500. And more and more $500 is coming to be the base price for short stories in publications whose circulation is in excess of a half million.

From that figure the price of a short story goes up to the $5,000 per story once paid to Rudyard Kipling and possibly paid in one or two other rare instances. In 1924 about $4,900 was paid for a Sherlock Holmes story, the contract being at so much per word. This form of contract is now rare.

Prices for first American serial rights are now (the end of 1925) a rather rapidly rising market and it is safe to say that the next few years will see new high levels for the best-known living writers. Already several such writers get $4,000 for a short story; perhaps twice as many get $3,500 and $3,000. The price of a short story by an established and successful author is fixed and increased solely by the demand for his work in the various markets, with respect to what those markets regularly pay. As I write it ranges from

$750 to $2,000 for the great majority of familiar names.

The reader may ask if price bears any relation to the merit of the work. The answer is distinctly, No. A's story, sold for $1,000, may be much better than B's, for which the same editor paid $2,000. But let us consider A and his work for a representative instance.

A sold his first story for $300. After a little he got $500 per story. He had written and sold thirty stories, his price gradually improving, before he got $1,000. Some of his stories at $1,000 are no better than some that sold at $500, but by this time his name has a certain value and his work has a certain audience. But the quality of a particular story, or its value, is a matter of opinion. A may have one opinion, the editor may have another, and the agent, if there be one, may have a third. The majority of readers, when the time comes, may even have a fourth. The editor must buy in advance of publication and must pay on acceptance. If any attempt were made to fix the price according to the worth[1] of a particular story all markets would be destroyed. A would never know what his work was going

[1] "Worth" *must* mean broad popular appeal and established reputation as well as technical skill or the more debatable "literary" merit of any story.

to bring, in addition to the incurable uncertainty as to its selling at all; editors would never know with any precision what confronted them in the way of expenditure. An author's price, therefore, is fixed by the general level of his work, the value of his name, the demand for his product, and the actual or fancied future of his writing.

The best markets never attempt to cut a writer's price. Except the story be one that has long remained unsold, or one disabled by some such circumstance as prior publication in England and possible loss of copyright, the best markets will always meet an author's price in the author's best market, or raise it. The more successful editors take the position that, though they may never cut a writer's price and must on proper occasion raise that price, they will become increasingly critical of the product as the author's price increases. Theoretically, this might work out as follows: A would sell an editor ten stories in one year at $500 each. Some years later he might sell the same editor five stories in a year at $1,000 each. Actually, owing to increased demand for his work in other good markets, A will undoubtedly sell all his ten stories of the later year at $1,000. Moreover, he will have the great advantage of not depending, as perhaps he did at $500, on a single market, of having all his eggs

in one basket. It may be well to note here that the first thing a good agent does, after establishing his author in one good market, is to endeavor to place him in at least one other market.

Should a writer make an exclusive contract for his output? That must depend on the writer himself and the nature of his work; if he have a good agent, he will do well to follow the agent's advice. Some general observations may be in order.

The best-known and most successful American magazine never makes a contract. It has discovered and developed dozens of successful writers. Fully half of these, as their prices improved, have deserted it, though seldom completely unless required to by a contract for exclusive publication. It is an open question whether these abandonments have been wise.

The editor of the magazine in question has frequently had an understanding with authors, especially with those who began with him, that these authors would submit all their fiction to him. In a number of instances, due partly to the magazine's large consumption, this has practically resulted in exclusive publication, especially when the author's output was only moderately large. As I write I believe the record is held by an author

who has submitted seventy-two stories in succession, all of which have been bought.

This is an extreme instance, yet, in the history of this publication, not untypical. It requires more business wisdom than most authors are endowed with to understand that the editor has probably done the author a serious disservice when he binds him to the exclusion of other outlets.

Suppose an author to have had several of the best markets regularly buying his fiction. For a distinctly higher price he signs an exclusive contract with yet another magazine. It runs for two or three years.

Such a contract should never be made without advising present markets, not with an idea of competitive bidding, necessarily, but with the distinct purpose of showing good will and, if possible, retaining editorial good will.

The exclusive contract is made. It carries an option for renewal, but the author must face the possibility that it may not be renewed, the possibility that he has forfeited good will in his other markets, and the further prospect, against which he can take no safeguards, that his previous markets, though not ill-willed toward him, may lose all interest in him and may develop in the period of the contract another writer or writers whose

work is similar or even better and meets the same demand from readers.

It will be useful for a writer to consider the problem, in leisure moments, from the editorial standpoint. Each editor has his own special problem of merchandising to solve. All magazine experience shows that in the long run, unless fiction is less than one-quarter of the contents of the magazine, the success of a magazine depends on the success of its fiction. In buying fiction the editor wants variety, contrast, color, and balance, but nearly always with a particular audience in mind. There will be certain types of stories, or certain subjects, which he cannot use. However, the great number and variety of magazines using fiction works to impose this limitation of type or subject on an editor only, scarcely on an author. It is, of course, true that the author may have to sell his work in a less profitable market; but it will almost certainly be marketable somewhere at some time—generally at any time—unless it be defectively written. For the general market is never over-supplied with good fiction and is never likely to be.

In general, and excluding the magazines where action stories are demanded, the surest market element in a story is good characterization. It is very easy, as editors know, for a story to misfire

with the majority of readers on plot, atmosphere, setting, or other attributes; but if the story contain one or more persons so perfectly drawn that nearly every reader can say: "I know that man," or "I know a woman just like her," then the reader has something certain for his time and the editor something sure for his money.

The only safety for an editor, as Rupert Hughes once observed, lies in purchasing only the stories he cannot refuse. His fundamental safety lies in his being an authentic member of the human race. If he edits a magazine of large circulation and if the number of fiction items in each issue be small, he must choose, with the rarest exceptions, only stories of wide reader appeal. He is certain to come upon an occasional story that will make him say to himself: "I am crazy about this story. And there are a lot of readers who will share my extreme enthusiasm. There are—let me see—easily 50,000 readers who will be as wild about it as I am. But our circulation is over 1,000,000 copies. Disregarding the fact that there are several readers per copy, it is evident that for 950,000 readers, the number in which this story appeared would be shy one story. And no number contains enough stories to warrant my facing that. I must wait until we use more stories before buying this sort."

In the affair of serial fiction the editorial handicap is much greater. A serial has one purpose, to make the reader buy the next issue, and if it lack serial suspense, or some compelling human appeal that literally forces the reader to go to the next installment, no other virtues it may possess are of the slightest worth to the editor in ordinary circumstances. On the other hand, if the serial suspense is present, no matter what the other defects, the serial rights are worth top price according to the market.

First, a word as to prices. At the present time (the end of 1925) the sum of $50,000 has been paid for first American serial rights in several instances—Sir Hall Caine, Sinclair Lewis, Harold Bell Wright, and perhaps one or two others. Twenty-five thousand, thirty thousand, and in a few cases a larger sum is not at all rare. The prospect is that within five years all of the first-rank serial writers will receive between $30,000 and $50,000 for their work, with an occasional sale above $50,000.

But these writers are few. Almost, they can be numbered on the fingers of both hands. Experience tends to show that the number will always remain pretty constant, at ten or a dozen. The first and indispensable qualification is the ability to provide serial suspense. Other requisites vary,

but are certain to include one or more of the following: a huge popular sale in book form; a steady and long increase in popularity; a large following among magazine readers, assuring increased news stand circulation whenever the writer's work is appearing. I need not say that the foundation is exclusively in the human values, not at all in the literary values, of the writer's product.

Serial suspense, if the work of those who excel in providing it can furnish a rule, is likely to be at war with the qualities which make a substantial, and even a popular, novel. As a rule serial quality is fully achieved only when the story is deliberately planned and written in arcs of the length desired for magazine installments. These lengths vary greatly. A weekly may require installments of 5,000 to 10,000 words; a monthly may use 20,000-word installments and swallow the serial in three or four big bites. Obviously the points of suspense—suspense of the sort designated as "breathless"—will not fall in the right places without artful preparation.

An effective serial is the most valuable property a magazine can acquire, although, as a rule, sixty per cent of its value lies in the first two or three installments. It seems improbable, whatever a writer's talents, that the art or knack of first-rate

serial contrivance can be learned in more than one case out of a thousand. Perhaps, without some natural endowment, it cannot be learned at all. In general, a writer must go his own gait and let the serial lightning strike where and when it will. If he endeavor to write his book with a divided purpose, with one eye on serial money and one on book quality, he is almost certain to fail of either success. Many of the best serials, written as such and highly successful in magazine publication, fail dismally when brought out in book form.

Very many serials sell for sums of $5,000 to $20,000, and in the absence of any special guide to the price it may sometimes be arrived at by approximation from the price for the author's short stories. Suppose the author to be receiving $500 a story and the serial to have been purchased by a weekly for use in ten installments, each of approximately the length of a story. Five thousand dollars may be a very fair price, especially if it be the author's first sale of long fiction. On the other hand, in similar circumstances, the author's price for a short story being $1,750, a ten-part serial may be worth as high as $25,000.

An author, if he insist on acting as his own agent or if he finds himself obliged so to act, must learn to handle his work gingerly, and especially his long fiction. In any experience of length he

will discover that it is never good business to offer his wares in all, or even in a great many, markets. He must regard himself as a craftsman each of whose specimens has some touches of individuality and whose work as a whole has a distinct and separate identity. Egoism is a handicap, but a fastidious self-respect is an asset. It is a mistake ever to submit one's work in a quarter where its nature makes acceptance unlikely; it is a mistake to send out stories as you would deal cards; and particularly as regards long fiction is it a mistake, in the best markets, to show your work without first establishing by inquiry a probability that the market is open.

For many of the best serial markets are not open at a given time, or are in a semi-closed condition all of the time. With so much at stake in his long fiction, the editor often safeguards himself as well as he can by advance contracts for serials, or at least by options for first consideration of some well-known authors' next work. There are American magazines which have constantly on hand enough long fiction to supply them for three years ahead. This does not mean, always, delivered work; and especially does it not mean that the closed door is also a locked door. Knock on it. No good editor will refuse to tear up his schedule and throw away the price of some

purchased serial if you can show him the best serial he has seen in a number of years.

When we come to the consideration of book rights the picture is of an entirely different character.

It is axiomatic that one cannot count upon making a living by writing. The axiom must be doubly underscored when applied to the writing of books—text-books probably excepted.

There are two and a half times as many newspaper buyers in the United States as there are magazine purchasers, which has led some to infer that the country is not fully sold on the habit of reading magazines. This is probably true; but if it is so then Americans have not even begun to buy books.

Practically all books are published on a royalty arrangement by which the author receives ten per cent or more of the retail price of each copy sold. Novels sell at two dollars and two dollars and fifty cents, yielding the author twenty or twenty-five cents and upward. If the sale is above 5,000 copies, or some fixed higher level, the author's royalty may rise to fifteen per cent—thirty to thirty-seven and a half cents a copy. A few best-seller authors get twenty per cent, or forty cents a copy.

A first novel may sell 100,000 copies, of course. This happens about once in 1,000 times. In most of the other 999 cases the sale is under 5,000 copies, and the author receives less than $1,000.

Many of the most famous living authors do not regularly sell more than 20,000 copies, if so many. They can count upon $4,000 or $5,000 income from a novel in book form. If the novel goes into reprint this income may be extended. From the seventy-five-cent edition the author usually receives five cents a copy, or about two hundred and fifty dollars, as reprint editions are rarely less than 5,000 copies. By "reprint" is meant the seventy-five-cent edition brought out after the original edition is one or two years old, or appearing simultaneously with the motion picture made from the novel. Reprintings or new editions of the original two-dollar edition carry royalties at the rate set by the original contract.

If a new novel sell as many as 20,000 copies it is sure to be a best-seller in certain cities. Any new novel that sells 50,000 copies will figure, for a time at least, on the list of country-wide best-sellers. The number of novels published in the United States in any one year and selling 100,000 copies or over can still usually be counted on the fingers of two hands—sometimes the fingers of one hand.

There is dignity in a book, of course, and often a degree of literary excellence higher than characterizes much magazine fiction. But the title of this book is *The Commercial Side of Literature,* and I think it well to make that our sole present reckoning; and if we are to do so we must face facts honestly.

Unless one is able to control completely his scale of living and is willing to live modestly, it will but rarely be possible for him to secure a living from books, except they be text-books, over any period of years.

The lightning may strike, but as a rule it takes a succession of highly meritorious novels to attain a sale of 20,000 copies for the new book; or, if the writer have wide popular appeal, to attain a sale of 50,000 copies. And not even the sale of 50,000 copies, by itself, spells wealth.

How, then, do novelists live? Many don't. A great number of them, perhaps the greater number, write short stories and sell them with more or less success. Some of the best-known living novelists have what are unfeelingly designated as regular jobs—as if writing a novel were not a regular job. They work in publishing houses and in business houses unconnected with any phase of their art except, perhaps, as a source of material for their fiction. A few, like John

Galsworthy, inherit incomes; now and then an author marries a woman of means. Occasional serial and motion-picture money tide others along. For a dozen years Joseph Conrad was helped by the money of those who believed in his eventual success.

There is much more of this investment in "literary futures" than most people have any notion of on the part of magazines, book publishers, and agents. A percentage of it is certain loss, and, at least in the case of book publishers, the total of such advances often runs into thousands of dollars.

The position of the English novelist, at least in England, is much better than that of the American novelist in America, to this extent: The Englishman knows much more surely what he can count upon. Sales of an author's new book in England show usually a slight increase over sales of the previous book, unless the new book suddenly swings into the stride of a best-seller. If the author is losing ground, the loss on sales of successive books will be equally slight; the decline, in any case, will be a slow decline. But in America an author whose last book has perhaps sold close to 100,000 cannot *count* on more than 25,000 or 30,000 for the new book; if the new novel be a definite departure in style, theme, or handling

from the big success, it may easily sell less. An author's sales in England present an orderly and interesting chart; in America too often they resemble the record made by a seismograph.

There is never the slightest difficulty in finding an American publisher for any book of the slightest merit. New American publishing houses appear almost yearly, and as book-publishing is a business not subject to quite the same drastic action of financial laws as other business enterprises, failures are very rare and even the quiet disappearance of a publishing business is not common.

After a writer has had one novel published, it is often not difficult to get a cash payment or advance at the time of publication of the new book, or even perhaps on delivery of the manuscript in acceptable form. The amount will vary between $250 and $1,000, rarely more, according to the earnings in royalties on the previous book and the probable market for the new one. This advance is merely an advance against royalties, and the author will do well to endeavor to secure it unless he is in no especial need of money, since ordinarily one has to wait from six to nine months after a book's publication, or from a year to a year and a quarter after its completion, for the first royalty payment.

On a work of fiction, the first royalty payment, or the first and second, depending on the time of book publication, will in most cases comprise ninety per cent of all income from the regular edition. The life of a novel is short and, in America, is becoming shorter. In the effort to turn over their stock at least four times a year—a pathetically humble ambition—booksellers naturally display new fiction for three months. Then, unless it be in constant demand, it goes under the counter. Even a best-seller may be undisplayed after three months; the bookseller must sell what he can of still newer books and let the older one sell itself.

In the judgment of many qualified by experience, there are disheartening factors in the book position. Blame for these is batted back and forth annually between booksellers and publishers, with the authors impartially blaming both. With these matters in dispute we are not concerned, but since publishers and booksellers recriminate upon authors, and since authors are unquestionably parties to the general fault, something must be said as to what an author should do—temperamental manifestations aside—to help his books.

Mr. Joseph has dealt with such matters as publicity and the extent to which an author may well

aid his publisher. But there are certain fundamentals that cannot be overemphasized.

Except with mystery and detective stories, or unless the publisher expressly urges it, a book a year is a wise limit for a novelist. Even this schedule may be too rapid, but it is perhaps wise until a distinct measure of success has been achieved. Then a two-year schedule should be adopted and adhered to. You will find, on examination, that most of the very successful novelists are careful not to have less than two years between books, and three years is not uncommon. It is a part of success to make, and to enable the publisher to make, the new book a kind of event. New books treading too closely on the heels of each other do even more than the bookseller's desire for quick turnover to curtail full sales.

If you are a novelist, do not collect your short stories in book form. In general, and above everything, do not feel that anything you write, or all that you may write, should find publication in book form. Heed nobody's persuasion in this matter, no, not your publisher's; no, not your wife's. Short of incalculable good luck, your fortune as an author of books depends on avoiding an anti-climax. To slump badly even once is to jeopard your whole future, so far as your books are concerned. Never dig up, nor allow to be

dug up and published, earlier and inferior, or even doubtful, work. In short, so conduct yourself that the publisher will have no alibi and the bookseller no copies of your book to hurl after you.

Parenthetically, an author can do nothing more detrimental to himself and his work—quite aside from the taste of the proceeding—than to inquire of, pester, or harass booksellers about his own book. It is an advantage to know booksellers and to have them know you; they are human, and to know you makes your book mean more than, very possibly, it otherwise could. But meet them and know them as friends, as persons sympathetically interested in a thing you are interested in—books, just books in general, and, except by invitation otherwise, exclusively the other fellows' books.

Second serial rights, or republication, usually with cutting, in newspapers, are sometimes preempted by the book publisher; but with the possible exception of a first novel the author should insist on at least half of the money derived from these rights. The money seldom amounts to much unless the second serial rights are bought or handled by one of the larger newspaper syndicates. The sum paid by each newspaper is usually insignificant, but a good syndicate may sell second

serial rights to twenty-five newspapers in as many cities, or more, for an appreciable total. The author will probably do better, even on a fifty-fifty arrangement, through syndicate handling than in an attempt to sell direct.

Both second serial and reprint rights may find no market. Reprint publishers do not buy the privilege of a seventy-five cent edition unless the sale in the regular edition has been above 10,000 (usually above 20,000) and the novel is popular in type; or unless the motion picture rights have been sold. I have known a novel to sell over 50,000 copies and be refused for reprint because its quality was literary rather than popular. The publishers of reprints once burned their fingers badly with a seventy-five-cent edition of William De Morgan; hence this caution. On the other hand, a motion-picture production will secure a large seventy-five-cent edition of almost any novel, no matter how limited its first sale, no matter what its type of story; one has only to recall the reprint editions of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and W. B. Maxwell's *The Devil's Garden* to grasp this.

Exceptions only test the rule, they do not break it. There is an American novelist whose work has sold around 10,000 in the regular edition and regularly sells 100,000 or over in the seventy-

five-cent edition. The answer is found in the extremely simple, naïve, over-emotional and widely popular character of her fiction.

Your publisher, if you have no literary agent, will discover reprint possibilities, if any exist, and for the simple reason that he makes as much from reprinting as you do. The reprint publisher rents the original plates from which your book was printed; he is thus saved all the costs of putting into type and electrotyping, or plate cost, as it is called. He rents the plates at a royalty of ten cents a copy—five to your publisher who owns the plates, and five cents to you.

There are, of course, dramatic rights—the possibility, usually faint, that a play for the speaking stage may be made out of your novel or story. Unless you have direct access to some producer of plays or some actor or actress in leading rôles, it is little or no use to try to sell dramatic rights. Better not try to sell them; rather be content to let some one buy them. If your work, serially or in book form, achieves any measurable degree of success, and if there is a possibility of a play in it, you will probably be approached by somebody with a view to that end. Then, unless you are inured to every species of mental and emotional exposure and hardship, make a contract for half royalties, the other half to go to the playwright,

known or unknown, accept as large an advance against half royalties as you can acquire in spot cash, give everybody your fullest blessing, and go away, away, away. Keep away, too. Give neither advice nor assistance, resist all flatteries and entreaties, attend no rehearsals. Attend, if you must, the opening night, if there is one—and I mean the opening night in New York, not the out-of-town trial. But the really chic thing to do is to keep absolutely afar, remaining completely deaf, dumb, and blind until the one hundredth performance, condescending then to accept a box. Of course this program of Solomonic wisdom may be wrecked by the necessity of conciliating the chief actor or actress—but why? Let the playwright do it, and the producer.

You adopt any other procedure at your own peril.

Do not undertake in any way to prepare or assist in preparing the stage version unless your nerve is of iron.

In your contract, bind yourself to no assistance and stipulate nothing in the way of your approval.

Realize absolutely that the cash advance you secure is your sole certainty. The chance of your work reaching a New York theater at all is infinitely small; the chance of its succeeding after it gets there is not large; besides, you will not recog-

nize it as your work (remember this to ease the pangs of disappointment if it is never staged or, performed, does not succeed).

It is true that if, if, if, if in the *n*th expanding series, your half royalties during the New York performance may run as high as $1,000 a week, and that four or five road companies the next two years may keep the stream of gold flowing into your pocket without appreciable diminution, that one play may, even at half royalties, yield a small fortune . . . if, if, if in the *n*th series.

Dramatic rights cannot be sold without warming up the market. A good agent may be able to do something in this direction; except for the accident of friendly acquaintance with some producer of plays or some star, you can do naught. What is "warming up"? Nothing in the world but arousing advance interest *before the thing is shown* in the potential market. If you happen to know how to arouse that interest—what to tell and what not—where to tell it, and when—you may accomplish something by yourself. You may, indeed, be one of those authors who are also excellent salesmen; there are some. But if you are not, better use an agent; if you are not, find it out with the first failure.

Incidentally this method of warming up is that used by all the best literary agents where they

have something of importance to sell—an expensive serial, for instance. Of course the market that is warmed, the editor who gets the selling approach, knows perfectly well what is on the carpet. That does not lessen his interest—an editor cannot afford to become cynical. The experienced buyer does not discount what the preparing seller says; his attitude is simply that he is hearing the favorable side of a case soon to be brought into his court and tried by him. He realizes that he may not even be hearing all of the favorable side; the point is, is he interested? Will he advance the calendar and call for the evidence?

Nearly everything said above concerning the disposal of dramatic rights and the author's attitude toward their realization is applicable, word for word, to the sale of motion-picture rights.

The fundamental difference in terms of sale is that motion-picture sales are outright, for a lump sum in cash, not for royalties, and are for world rights in so far as the film is concerned. The knowledge by the author that he is receiving at once all he can ever receive from the picture rights should make easier his happy surrender of all connection with what is to follow the sale.

As with a play, nothing may follow. After

buying the rights, the motion-picture people may discover that there is no picture in the book, or none for their purpose, or none for their star, or none in the view of the director; or they may film the thing and then discover they haven't a picture worth anything at the box office.

Shun Hollywood. If invited to go make polite and plausible excuses; if you go at all, select with care some time when a picture from your own book or story is not in the making; never go except casually as a disinterested and friendly observer; and whatever your inward response, observe the etiquette of your host's house, lot, and location. The motion-picture people, like the rest of us, suffer horribly from an inferiority complex; respect it—or at least be considerate toward it.

I do not mean to imply that the motion-picture people have no case. They spend huge sums of money, take all the risks of their vast gambles, and are entitled to make their own mistakes. Nor do they always make mistakes. It is also supremely true that they must put across something that will profit them at the box office, just as a publisher must have books that will sell in the bookstore, a magazine, fiction that will sell on the news stands.

Various writers have gone to Hollywood at one time or another tempted by contracts at so

many hundreds a week. The general result does not encourage the prospect. A few writers have been able to give the picture people directly ideas that the picture-makers could use, or have been able to tinker scenarios or tackle continuities with a certain effectiveness; but these instances appear to be exceptions.

One word about motion-picture prices: $25,000 is still a thumping good price for motion-picture rights and the great run of stuff is sold at $5,000 (or even less) and $10,000. It is most unwise, as a general thing, to refuse a reasonable offer unless you are willing to forgo sale entirely except at your own price. Thus $52,500 was offered for motion-picture rights of a play which had run for a year in New York. It was refused, and eventually the rights had to be sold for $30,000.

Why is this? Because the market for motion-picture rights is the most erratic, not to say lunatic, on earth. An offer, and a good one, may come out of the blue sky and require acceptance in half a day or half an hour. The offer may then be withdrawn and no amount of coaxing be able to revive it or find another offer.

But why? Well, recently Pola Negri (or was it Gloria Swanson?) arrived in New York after a trip abroad. She was due to begin work making a new picture the next day. It was very

necessary that she should, since a year's schedule would be imperiled if she didn't, and a delay in production would breach contracts with distributors and cause all kinds of lawsuits and confusion (or so everyone insisted). A script of the proposed play was handed to the actress as soon as the ship entered New York Harbor. She took a hasty look and declared that she wouldn't act in *that*. No alternative play having been thoughtfully provided, the country quivered from coast to coast while a frantic effort was made to buy something suitable or suiting so that work could begin at 9 A. M. It is very possible that something in a hurry could then have been sold for $50,000, or even $100,000.

But only the professional market knew of the sudden emergency or was in a position to make a sale.

This incident suggests, however, the character of the market for motion-picture rights. It is a market eager to pay $25,000 to-day for something for which it will not give one cent to-morrow. It buys because the author has a famous name; because the book has sold well; because the serial carries a punch; because it hears that some one has offered to do the story as a play; because a rival company has bought a certain

type of story and Films, Infuriated, must instantly acquire a competitive story of that type; because a director wants to shoot certain scenes in your novel; because a star thinks she would film well in the leading rôle—for any reason or for no reason. It even buys because your story will make a perfectly corking picture.

One further comment: Most rights are realized rather quickly or not at all—as serial rights. Motion pictures sometimes materialize after your magazine story is water long since passed under the bridge, or years after your novel has been published, had its sale, and ceased to sell. It is a long chance that you will sell motion-picture rights eight or ten years after publication, but it is a palpable chance.

There is perhaps nothing of importance particular to the American market to be said about translation and other minor rights in literary property. I have dealt almost entirely with fiction, in the consideration of the various markets, and must now say a word or two about non-fiction. A great deal of this is specialized or department stuff, so far as magazines are concerned; but what about the article of more or less general interest?

The best-known American magazine uses such articles in a volume equal to the fiction content,

or roughly so. It practically never uses an article submitted in complete form, but unsolicited and undiscussed.

As this is to a less extent true of many other magazines, it becomes very well worth while to formulate a simple rule. Adherence to the rule will, in the course of a lifetime, save you postage. The rule is:

Drop the editor a line suggesting the article you have in mind—briefly—and perhaps stating your qualifications to write it, *briefly*. You needn't really ask for an appointment; if he sees a chance that you can do something he wants, he'll ask to talk it over, or else tell you to go ahead—but usually without a definite order.

Articles are generally *ordered* only from experienced writers, or from a writer from whom the editor has already accepted work.

Even a good editor rarely knows what he wants until he sees it, or at least hears about it; if he knows it then he is a good editor. And if you think he should know it sooner, don't call for the menu the next time you are ordering a meal in a restaurant.

Nevertheless, some of the best editors sometimes know what they want without the *carte du jour* and on such occasions they send for the man

or woman whose work they know and who is likely best to realize the airy vision.

Ruling prices for articles are approximately one-half those for fiction stories—$200 or $250 to $1,000 as against $500 to $2,000—with the same latitude in the upper range of prices for big names and superior workmanship.

Second serial rights to an article of wide popular interest may amount to something in the hands of a good newspaper syndicate.

A good biography or autobiography, a humorous book, a popular historical work, an account of exploration or travel, may run a course very much like a new novel, so far as first serial, book, and second serial rights go. There may even be derivable from a biography or a humorous book a play. Reprint—the seventy-five-cent book—confines itself to fiction.

Book royalties on non-fiction tend to be rather less than on fiction and are usually only ten per cent unless the book goes to a sale of over 10,000 copies.

The magazine markets for articles of general interest are far fewer than for fiction. Articles may be much more variable in length, however, within these markets than fiction can usually be. If you have exceptionally good photographs, it is

worth while offering them with your article, or perhaps showing them when you are trying to sell your idea to the editor, but an offer to illustrate an article is needless and usually thankless. A magazine has at its command the resources of all the photographers in America, and according to its means to pay, a sufficient number of the finest illustrators. Pictures are not a part of your job and may in most instances better be left to the art editor.

Unless articles are closely related and form a complete exposition and series, with some approach to a climax, it is a mistake to offer them for book publication; and even then it may be a mistake. A connected or organic work of non-fiction, of book length, is another matter. Whereas book length for fiction is nearly always 60,000 words or more, and preferably between 70,000 and 100,000 words, a non-fiction book may be anything between 40,000 and 100,000 words; it must, however, be homogeneous.

Text-books are a law unto themselves. They carry much lower royalties, but these, if the book is in proper hands for exploitation, are paid ultimately on much larger sales than any other type of book usually attains; besides, the life of a text-book may be almost concurrent with the life of its author. It is not worth while to attempt a

text unless (a) you have interested an influential publisher of such books and (b) you are prepared to accept his guidance in writing. It often takes three years fairly to launch a text. If you have not an academic reputation or do not hold a fairly important position in the public educational system, you will be by so much disadvantaged in a field where the competition is rigorous and the wire-pulling rather extraordinary. Get a good publisher and follow his suggestions, including public addresses, lectures, and papers, visits and entertaining, as well as in writing the book. One satisfactory text-book and a little discipline may make you financially secure for life.

In a striking passage in *The Cruise of the "Nona"* Hilaire Belloc points out the great truth that man was no more meant to live by writing than by conversation, or by walking about the country. "The whole point is missed," says the veteran Belloc, "by those who complain that there is no market for good writing," and he goes on to remark that sometimes there is a market for good writing and sometimes for very bad writing, sometimes for useful writing and again for writing that is of no use whatsoever, even as recreation. The corollary should be plain: Since you aim to live by writing, and since a handful do so live,

you had better live with the modesty befitting any gambler. The fact of success obscures, for too many people, the nature of that success; and a living gained by writing, or even a fortune gained by writing, remains a successful—gamble.

I will indulge in a plain statement.

Anyone who makes a living by writing, no matter how large may be his income, and who considers himself warranted in a budget of more than $10,000 annually, is a fool.

Any income in excess of $10,000, to the furthest possible extent, should be carefully husbanded and invested in interest-bearing securities yielding not more than five per cent and legal for savings banks in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York.

When $200,000 has been so invested, the writer will receive his $10,000 annually in interest thereon, and may then throw his excess annual income to the ducks and drakes if he chooses. Then, and not any sooner, will be the occasion for him to build a $50,000 country home with a private golf course—always providing he leaves his $200,000 intact.

For, my dear fellow, there is a Home for Seamen on Staten Island, New York. There is a home for indigent actors, I think in the same spot. And although Andrew Carnegie left a cer-

tain income to the Authors Club of New York to administer charitably, it is not huge, and you might not be adjudged a Needy Case in time. No, there is no home for distressed authors; at least, I know of none.

INDEX

Accounts, publishers', 123, 145
Advances to authors, 145–147
Advantages and disadvantages of big and small publishers, 87, 88, 89
Adventure story, 20, 28, 32
Advertising, 90–91, 94, 176, 177, 182, 217
Agencies, press-clipping, 223; film, 191
Agent, literary, 72, 73, 74, 112–137; objections to, 115, 129; value of to author, 115, 118–137, to publisher, 114, 116, 135; "reading fees," 116; play, 198, 200
Agreements, canceling, 154
American Copyright Act of 1909, 164–166
Angel, Norman, 67
Anti-climax, avoiding an, 250
Approaching editors, 261
Archer, William, 18, 196
Arsène Lupin, 30
Articles, prices for, 262.—*See also* Short stories, prices for
Art, letters on, 53
Asquith, Earl, 49
Atlantic Monthly, 232
Aumonier, Stacy, 41
Austen's, Jane, definition of a novel, 24
Austrian film producers, 184
Authors, contempt of some, 7; relations between publisher and, 76; "vanity," 80, 81, 141; loyalty of to publishers, 78, 85; impatient, 103; value of agent to, 115, 118–137; "authors' books," 141, 142; advances to, 145–147; corrections, 171; photographs, 209, 210, 224; attitude toward publicity, 210; and the press, 213–217; as salesmen, 255; and motion-picture people, 257; incomes, 265
"Authors' books," 141, 142
Authors Club (New York), 266
Authors' League, 72, 140, 155
Authors' League Bulletin, 82
Authorship as a profession, 71
Autobiography, 262
Babbitt, 16
Bad publishers, 79
Barbusse, 39
Barrie, 179
Barrington, E., 20, 35
Belles-Lettres, 44, 53
Belloc, Hilaire, 53, 264
Benchley, Robert, 33
"Best seller," 8–19, 54, 60, 183, 245
Big and small publishers, advantages and disadvantages of, 87, 88, 89

Big Parade, The, 38
Binding, of MSS., 106; of a book, 175
Biography, 44, 45, 46, 50–52, 262
Black Beauty, 14
Blatchford, Robert, 63
Blue Bird, The, 179
Book, production, 3, 84, 85; rights, 230, 231
Books, ever-growing demand for, 1; increasing crop of, 1; published in 1910, 3; published in 1924, 3; non-fiction, 44–70; travel, 44, 54–55; topography, 44, 54–55; technical, 44, 55–58; educational, 44, 59–61; political, 44, 61–65; on economics, 44, 65–67; production, foreign, 67; on psychic subjects, 70, 84, 85; binding, 175; marketing, 175–180; what sells? 176; price of, 181; cost of manufacture, 181
Booksellers, 91
Boyd, James, 35
Boyd, Thomas, 39
British Museum, 162
Broadcasting, 72, 120, 153, 160, 166
Burroughes, Edgar Rice, 208
Byron and the Murrays, 78
Caine, Sir Hall, 240
Canada, sales in, 145
Canadian, bookseller, 48; market, 48, 145; copyright, 166
Canceling agreements, 154
Capek, Karel, 68
Characterization, 238
"Charley's Aunt," 179
Cheap edition, rights, 72, 143; clause, 152, 154
Chesterton, G. K., 30, 53
Cole, G. D. H., 66, 67
Commercialization of printing on a large scale, 1
"Commission," publishing on, 79, 80, 81, 141, 142
Commons, John R., 66
Competition among publishers, 74
Connolly, James B., 29
Conrad, Joseph, 29, 41, 247
Constable & Co., Ltd., 89
Constable's Monthly List, 89
Contracts, 84, 138–155, 199, 236
Copyright, 143, 156–167
Copyright Act of 1911 (English), 159–164; of 1909 (American), 164–166
Corrections, authors', 171, 172, 173
Cost of production, 76
Creating a market, 126
Criticism, press, 220
Cruise of the "Nona," The, 264
Curwood, James Oliver, 28
Dell, Ethel M., 7, 12, 25, 210, 220
de Morgan, William, 252
Detective story, 20, 30–32, 94, 250
Devil's Garden, The, 252
Dickens, Charles, 14
Don Quixote, 14
Dos Passos, John, 39
Doyle, Sir A. Conan, 30, 49
Dramatic instinct, 196, 197, 198
Dramatic rights, 72, 153, 163, 230, 231, 253, 255, 256

Dramatization of a novel, 199, 253–256
Drinkwater, John, 58
Dwight, H. G., 53
Eclipse of Empire, 67
Economics, 44, 65–67
Editorial publicity, 217, 229
Editors, approaching, 261
Education, spread of popular, 1
Educational works, 44, 59–61
England, copyright in, 159; film in, 184, 191; Act of 1911 in, 159, 160
English Copyright Act of 1911, 159–164
English, film producers, 184; novelist, position of, 247
English-language books, market for, 207, 208
Essays, 53
Exclusive contracts, 236
Ex-Kaiser, the, 49, 52
Farnol, Jaffery, 35
Fashions in fiction, 19
Father Brown, 30
Father of the English Novel, 2
Fiction, demand for, 4; writing, successful, 10; fashions in, 19; Victorianism in, 34; juvenile, 37; difference between, and films, 192
Film producers, Austrian, 184; English, 184; German, 184; Scandinavian, 184
Film, rights, 72, 120, 143, 153, 163, 184; stories, demand for, 184, 188; producers, requirements of, 184; cost of producing, 190; value of rights, 191; lease of rights, 192; market for rights, 192; difference between, and fiction, 192
"First novel," the, 40
First serial rights (American), 230–240
Fletcher, J. S., 30
Florentine Dagger, The, 31
Footner, Hulbert, 30
Foreign rights, 153, 207, 208
Forster, E. M., 16
Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, The, 38
Free copies, 152
French language, 207
Frost, Robert, 58
Futures, literary, 247
Gaboriau, Paul, 30
Galsworthy and the Scribners, 78
Galsworthy, John, 42, 247
George, Lloyd, 49
German film producers, 184
Gibbs, Sir Philip, 14
Glasgow, Ellen, 34
Good publishers, 79
Great Britain, Act of 1911 in, 159, 160; value of filmable stories in, 191; syndication in, 206
Green Goddess, The, 18
Green Hat, The, 13
Grey, H. H., 67
Grey Room, The, 31
Grey, Viscount, 49
Grey, Zane, 7
Guest, Eddie, 58
Haggard, Sir H. Rider, 28
Hallett, Richard Matthews, 29
Hardy and the Harpers, 78
Hardy, Thomas, 252
Harpers, Hardy and the, 78

Hecht, Ben, 31
Historical romances, 20, 35–36
History of the American People, 60
Huckleberry Finn, 14
Hughes, Charles Evans, 206
Hughes, Rupert, 239
"Human interest," 10–12, 18
Humorous novel, 20, 32–33
Ibáñez, Vicente Blasco, 68
If Winter Comes, 11, 13, 14
Illustrations, 174, 263
Imprint, significance of, 41, 90–98
Incomes, authors', 265
Incorporated Society of Authors, 161
Instinct, dramatic, 196, 197, 198
Interim copyright, 165
"Jacket," 15–16, 174.—*See also* Wrapper
Jacobs, W. W., 33
James, Henry, 7
Johnson, Dr., 73
Journalism, qualification for success in, 44; advanced, 44
Juvenile fiction, 37, 80
Keynes, J. M., 66
Kipling, Rudyard, 42, 58, 233
Lane, John, 39
Lawrence, D. H., 7
Leacock, Stephen, 33
Leblanc, Maurice, 30
Le Feu, 39
Length of the novel, 40
Lewis, Sinclair, 240
Libel clause, 152
Library of Congress, 164
Life, letters on, 53
Life of a novel, 249
Lind, Jenny, 179
Lindsay, Vachell, 58
Literary, property, value of, 4; the novelist as a, 77, 129; reputation, establishing a, 77; agents, 255
Literary reputation, establishing a, 77
Literature, letters on, 53
Little Lord Fauntleroy, 14
Living, making a, by writing, 244, 246
London, Jack, 28
Love story, the, 24
Lowell, Amy, 58
Lowndes, Mrs. Belloc, 30
Lucas, E. V., 53
Macdonald, Ramsay, 51
Mackensie, Compton, 34
Maeterlinck, 179
Magazines, 230–243; markets for articles, 262
Main Street, 13
Manuscripts, cost of reading, 101–102; preparation of, 104, 106; binding of, 106; numbering of pages, 107; procedure in reading, 108; submitting, 109; agents' "reading fees," 116; no copyright in, 166
Market, creating a, 126
Marketing a book, 175–180
Marshall, Edison, 28
Masefield, John, 18, 59
Maxwell, W. B., 82, 86, 252
McFee, William, 53
Melba, Madame, 49
Memoirs, 44, 46–49
Merit, novel of, 17
Merrick, Leonard, 16, 199

Merry England, 163
Middle of the Road, The, 13, 14, 36
Millay, Edna St. Vincent, 58
Milne, A. A., 31, 33
Morel, E. D., 67
Morley, Christopher, 53
Motion-picture, rights, 153, 184, 230, 231, 252, 256–260; people, authors and, 257; prices, 258
Mottram, R. H., 38
Mr. Britling Sees It Through, 38
Murrays, Byron and the, 78
Mystery story, 30, 94, 250
New school publishers, 81
Newspaper syndicate, the, 231, 251, 262
Non-fiction books, 44–70; serialization of, 204
Novel, rapid growth and development of, 4; functions of, 5; title of a, 15; of merit, easy to get accepted, 17; romantic, 20, 34; humorous, 20, 32–33; psychological, 20, 33; historical, 20, 35–36; salacious, 27; picaresque, 34; sex, 39; Jane Austen's definition of a, 24; problem, 33; sporting, 36–37; war, 38; "first," 40; length of, 40; sales of a, 182; dramatization of a, 199; life of a, 249
Novelist as a "literary property," 77, 129
Novels, output of new, 1; increase in the number of, 2; "Why do people read," 5; of sentiment, 25; options on, 149; sales of, 245
Numbering of pages, 107
Of Human Bondage, 13
Old-established publishers, 81
Open-air story, 28
Oppenheim, E. Phillips, 30
Option clause, framing the, 150–152
Options on novels, 149
Ostrander, Isabel, 30
Outline of History, 60
"Outside" rights, 153–154.—*See also* Foreign rights
Pages, numbering of, 107
Pamela, 2
Parker, Sir Gilbert, 35
Passage to India, A, 16
Personal relations between publisher and author, 76, 78, 87, 112
Peter Pan, 179
Phillpotts, Eden, 31
Photographs, reproduction rights, 225; authors', 209, 210, 224, 262
Pickford, Mary, 48
"Picking out the plums," 221
Pilgrim's Progress, 14
Piracy, 165
Plagiarism, 152, 157–158
Play, requirements of a successful, 196; producing society, 196; ways of submitting a, 197; contracts, 199; agents, 198, 200
Play-producing society, 197
"Plums, picking out the," 221
Poetry, 44, 46, 58–59
Political books, 44, 61–65
Preliminary press advertising, 176, 177, 182
Preparation of MSS., 106

Press, advertising, 176, 177, 182; authors and the, 213–217; clippings, 222; prints, 226
Pre-war stories, 20
Prices, for short stories, 232, 233, 262; for first American serial rights, 240; for motion-picture rights, 258
Printers, 175
Printing, commercialization of on a large scale, 1
"Problem" play, 20
Production, cost of, 76; book, 3, 84, 85
Profession, authorship as a, 71
Profit, publisher's, 76
Profit-sharing, 142
Proofs, galley, 170; page, 173
Psychological novel, 20, 33
Public, reading, 93–98, 211, 215, 220
Publication, process of, 168
Publicity, value of, 210; authors' attitude toward, 210; effect of, 211–213; publishers' departments, 215; editorial, 217, 229
Publishers, competition among, 74; profit, 76; personal relation between, and author, 76, 78, 87, 112; loyalty of writers to, 78, 85; good, 79; bad, 79; "vanity," 80, 81, 141, 142; old-established, 81, new school, 81; big and small, advantages and disadvantages, 87, 88, 89; value of agent to, 114, 116, 135; accounts, 123, 145; serialization attitude, 202; publicity departments, 215; reprint, 252–253
Publishers' Circular, 3
Publisher's imprint, 41, 90–98
Publishers' Weekly, 3
Publishing, "on commission," 79, 80, 81, 141, 142; efficiency in, 89
Publishing world, conditions in, 4
"Readableness," 16
Readers, printers', 169; "queries" of, 171
Reading MSS., cost of, 104–106; procedure in, 108; fees, agents', 116
Reading public, 93–98, 211, 215, 220
Realistic school, 25, 27
Red Book, 7
Red House Mystery, The, 31
Religious bias, stories with a, 20
Reminiscences, 44, 46–49
Repertory company.—*See* Play-producing society
Reprint, publishers, 252–253; rights, 230, 231, 252
Republication.—*See* Second serial rights
Review copies, 176, 219
Reviewers, 8, 45, 46, 227, 228
Reviews, 8, 53, 176, 177, 217–222, 228
Rights, sales of, 232
"Rights, volume," 148
Rinehart, Mary Roberts, 30
Risks of publishing, 75, 180
Roberts, Cecil, 38
Robinson, James Harvey, 66
Romances, historical, 20, 35–36
Romantic novel, 20, 34
Roosevelt, President, 32

Rosary, The, 13
Rossini, 179
Rougemont, Louis de, 55
Royalties, 76, 84, 141, 144–147, 181, 182, 192, 198, 209, 244, 245, 247, 254, 255
Royalty system, the, 141
"R. U. R.," 68
Russell, Clark, 29
Sabatini, Rafael, 35
Sabre, Mark, 11
Sales, campaign, 178; reviews and, 219
Salesmen, authors as, 255
Sard Harker, 18
Savoy, The, 21
Scandinavian, film producers, 184; rights, 207
Scenario writing, 185
Science of selling books, 217
Scissors, 38
Screen material, 186
Scribners, Galsworthy and the, 78
Second serial rights, 205, 230, 251, 262
Selling books, science of, 218
Sentiment, novels of, 25
Serialization, 201–205
Serial rights, 72, 153, 163, 201–203, 205
Serials, prices for, 242; markets for, 242
Service, Robert W., 58
Sherlock Holmes story, 233
Short stories in volume form, 15, 20–25, 250
Short-story prices, 232, 233
Sinister Street, 34
Sketches, 53
Spanish Farm, The, 38
Sporting novel, the 36–37
Stewart, Donald Ogden, 33
Stories, short, in volume form, 15, 20–25; with a religious bias, 17; pre-war, 20; adventure, 20, 28, 32; love, 24; open-air, 28, 30; mystery, 30, 94; detective, 20, 30–32, 94; demand for film, 184
Story, 25,000-word, 43
Stosson, Edwin, 66
Submitting MSS., 109
Subsidiary rights, 143, 153, 154
Successful play, requirements of a, 196
Sullivan, 179
Suspense, serial, 240–241
Syndication, 205
Synopses, 187
Tarbell, Ida, 66
"Tarzan" novels, the, 208
Taste, public, 8
Tauchnitz Library, 148
Technical books, 44, 55–58
Territorial rights, 72, 120, 148
Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 252
Text books, 263
Theater Guild, 190
Three Soldiers, 13
Through the Wheat, 39
Time Machine, The, 35
Tom Sawyer, 14
Topography, books on, 44, 54–55
Translation rights, 72, 120, 154, 230, 231, 232, 260
Translations, 44, 67
Travel books, 44, 54–55
Tree, Beerbohm, 179
Turner, Samuel, 67

25,000-word story, the, 43
Unwin, Stanley, 181
"Vanity publishers," 80, 81, 141, 142
Verse, 80.—*See also* Poetry
Victorianism in fiction, 34
Volume form, short stories in, 15, 20–25, 250
"Volume rights," 148
von Bernhardi, General, 68
von Ludendorff, General, 49, 68
Wallace, Edgar, 30
Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 34
"Warming up," 255
War novel, the, 38
War of the Worlds, The, 35
Waugh, Alec, 96
Ways of submitting a play, 197
Webb, Sidney, 67
Wells, H. G., 35, 38, 60, 206
West, Rebecca, 21
Wetgen, Albert R., 29
Wharton, Edith, 34
What Price Glory, 38
What sells books?, 176
What time should elapse between novels, 250
"Why do people read novels?," 5
Wilson, Harry Leon, 33
Wilson, Woodrow, 60
Wodehouse, P. G., 33
Wonderful Visit, The, 35
Words in fiction, 263; in non-fiction, 263
Wrapper, 15–16, 174.—*See also* "Jacket"
Wright, Harold Bell, 240
Writers, loyalty of to publishers, 78, 85
Yale Review, 7
Yellow Book, The, 21